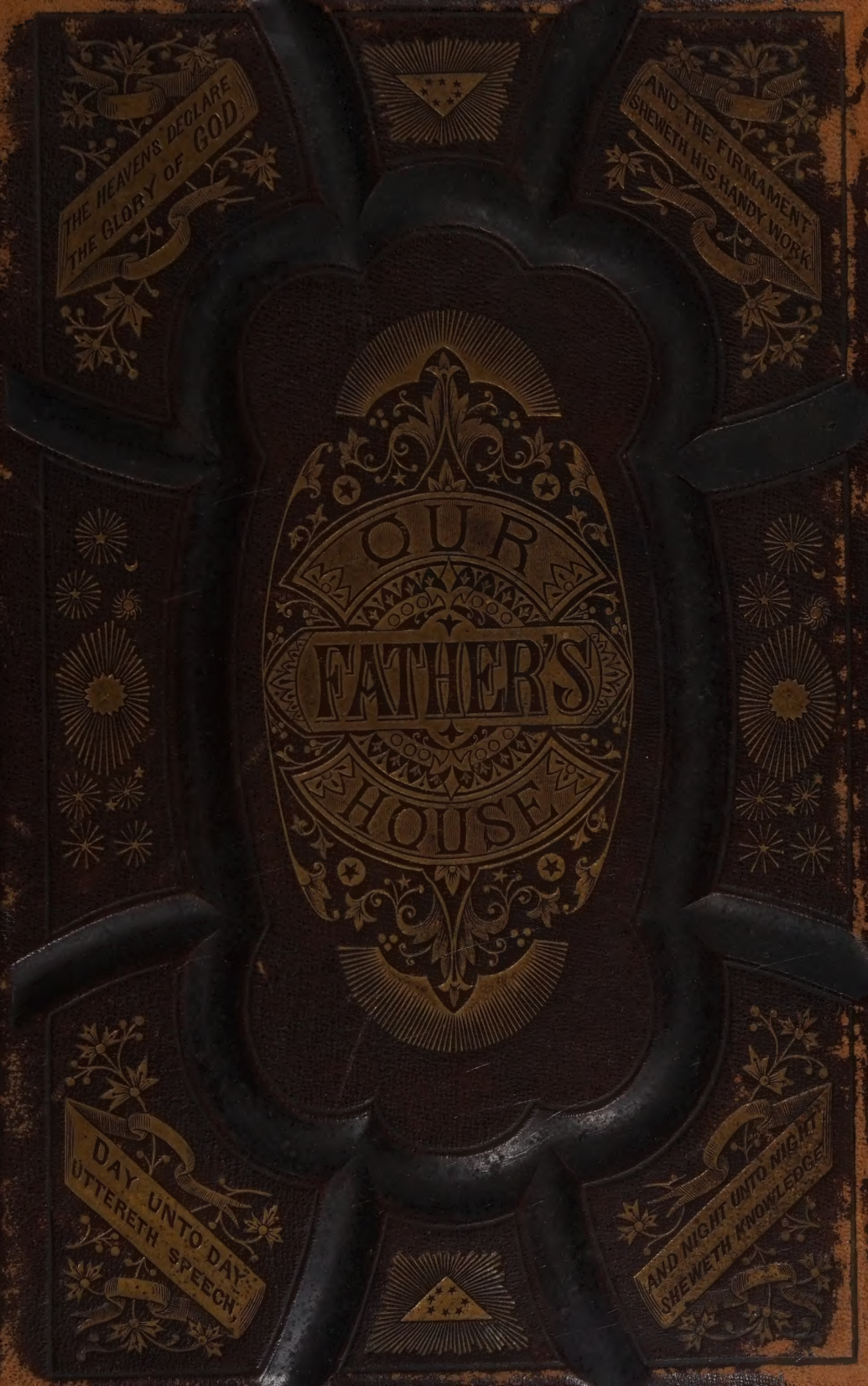
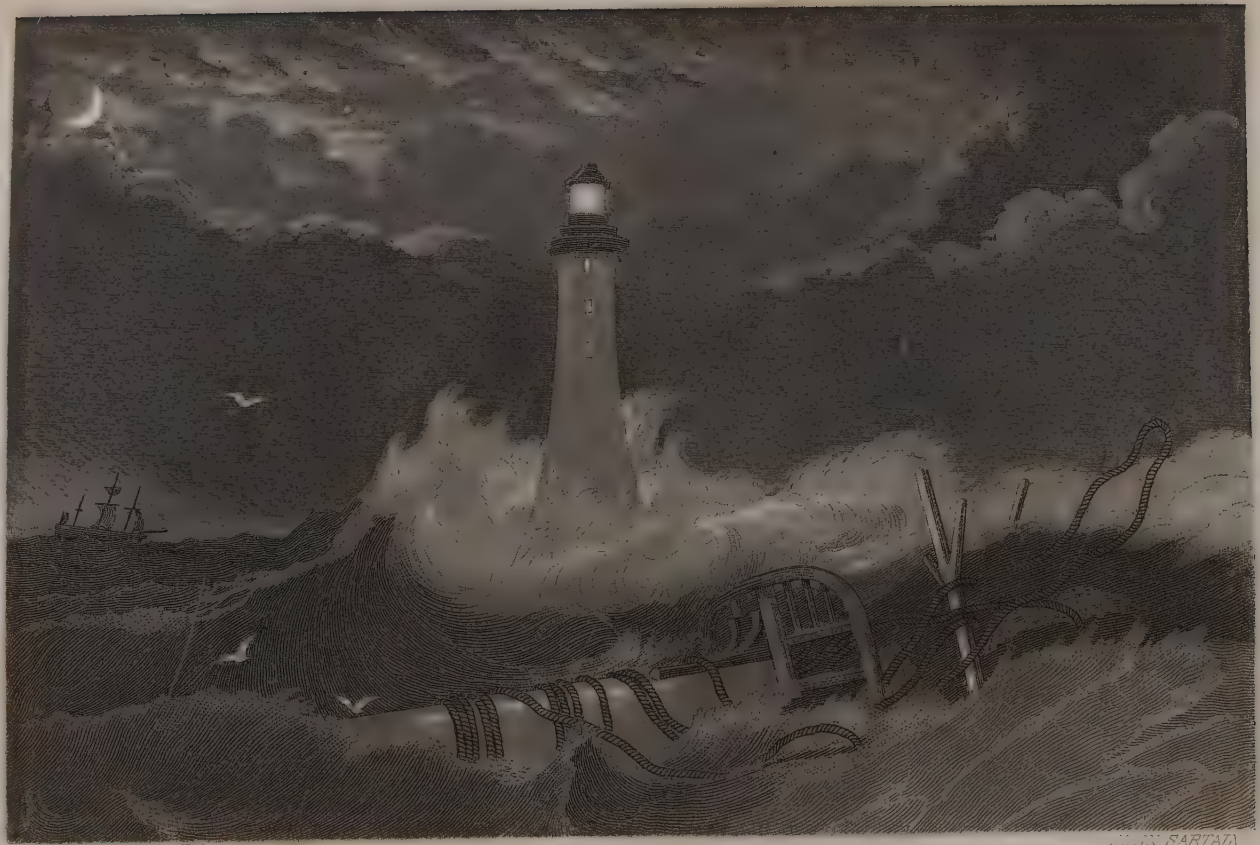

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD
AND THE FIRMAMENT SHEWETH HIS HANDY WORK
OUR FATHER'S HOUSE
DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH
AND NIGHT UNTO NIGHT SHEWETH KNOWLEDGE

Our Father's House.



FOUNDED ON A ROCK

OUR FATHER'S HOUSE,

OR THE

UNWRITTEN WORD

BY

REV. DANIEL MARCH, D.D.,

AUTHOR OF "NIGHT SCENES IN THE BIBLE."

ZIEGLER & McCURDY,

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PREFACE.

It is the highest attainment of human faith to believe that the Maker of all worlds is Our Father, and that this earth is but one of the many mansions in Our Father's House. It is the highest attainment of human philosophy to accept all the forms and forces of the physical world as revelations of God's Unwritten Word. The author of this book has tried to walk humbly hand in hand with both Faith and Philosophy while surveying the wonders of God's works for the illustration of the deeper wonders of God's word. Craving the company of such as can be persuaded to go with him, he would wander from room to room in the great House which God has built, wondering all the way at the riches and splendors stored in every apartment, and accepting every gift of his Father's love with the simplicity and thankfulness of a little child.

If my reader will consent to go with me in such a spirit, we shall together find it easy to draw lessons of heavenly wisdom from the most common objects of daily observation. We shall see God in the glory of infinite wisdom and love where faithless Science sees nothing but soulless law and purposeless phenomena. We shall gather eternal riches where the seekers after perishable gain find nothing but dust. We shall make the transient and perishable things of earth the repre-

sentatives of things unseen and eternal. We shall bind up the most spiritual truths in material forms, that we may grasp them the more firmly. We shall associate heavenly things with earthly phenomena, that they may occur to our minds the more constantly. We shall see God in all the works of his hands; we shall make the whole journey of life a happy walk of children with their Father. And whether we go out into the open fields and listen to the singing birds and the whispering winds and the murmuring forests, or whether we survey the heavens and trace the winged light to the most distant star, we shall see nothing but our Father's work—we shall always feel ourselves at home and in our Father's House.

This is after the manner of the instruction given by Him who taught us to say, Our Father who art in heaven. He spoke of men as God's children, and of the earth and heavens as the house which their Father had built and filled with all good things for them to use and enjoy with gratitude. In his vivid and pictorial teachings we see the blooming flowers clothed with beauty by our Father's hand; we hear the birds sing with thankfulness because they are fed by our Father's bounty; we feel a greater joy in the light of the sun because every beam shines from our Father's face; we delight the more in the sound of the falling rain because every drop is a messenger of our Father's mercy.

By this method of instruction our Lord renewed and sanctioned the vivid impersonations of ancient prophets and psalmists, who made the whole material creation vocal with the praise of the Most High. And the author of this book feels that the old Hebrew impersonations of God in nature are as appropriate now as they were in the days of David and Isaiah. The most advanced and exact science is ever consistent with the most simple and childlike faith. If Christ were on earth

now, teaching in this land as he taught on the hillsides of Galilee, we may venture to think that he would speak of the flowers and the grass, the birds and the rain, as familiarly as he did in the Sermon on the Mount. And this book has been written with the hope that it might help others to learn from common things and by daily observation just such lessons as Jesus taught when he said, "Behold the fowls of the air"—"Consider the lilies of the field."

Let us go forth, then, with a free and reverent step upon our survey of the riches and wonders of OUR FATHER'S HOUSE. And as we take here and there a favorable point of view, and direct our attention sometimes to things that we can best understand, and sometimes to those which utterly confound us by their greatness and mystery, let us try to read the book of divine revelation the more clearly in the light of God's UNWRITTEN WORD.

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God's Glory in the Heavens.

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J. PORTAELS. A.B. WALTER

THE NATAL STAR

Our Father's House.

I.

GOD'S GLORY IN THE HEAVENS.

THE early life and peculiar home of the Psalmist of Israel made him familiar with the aspect of the midnight heavens. When a shepherd boy, he had learned to tell the stars by name and to count them his companions, as he kept his flocks by night on the hills of Bethlehem. The skies that bent over him were without a cloud for half the year. The heavenly orbs that hung like golden lamps in the blue dome shone with a brightness unknown to northern climes. When the evening star came forth over the dark mountains of Moab, and the blazing constellations rode up the eastern heavens in the same silent and orderly march night after night, he must have asked, with deep earnestness, whose hand led forth the fiery host upon the fields of light; what unseen power preserved the celestial armies with unbroken ranks from age to age; what mighty magazines

of fuel must have been stored up from of old to keep so many fires burning from century to century?

Had the Psalmist lived in our time he would have found still more reason to ask such wondering questions as he gazed upon the starry heavens. We do indeed know more than he did of the number, the distance and dimensions of the celestial host, but our increase of knowledge only baffles and confounds us the more, because, with all our instruments and calculations, we cannot count the number, we cannot measure the distance, we cannot conceive the immensity of worlds which God's creative hand has strewn through the fields of immeasurable space.

In this course of Bible lessons from the book of Nature there is much reason why we should begin with the star-illumined scroll of the skies. Astronomy is the oldest, the most sacred and sublime of all the sciences. We need no record to prove its ancient birth. As soon as human curiosity looked out through the living orb of the eye, it must have turned with inquiring gaze toward the silent orbs of heaven. As soon as emotions of wonder and adoration were kindled into life on the altar of the human heart, there must have been devout and delighted observers of the starry host whose watchfires flame upon the measureless fields of the sky.

The flower that opened its frail beauty within reach of the observer's hand, the wild bird that lifted up its morning song in welcome of the returning light, the

evening cloud that curtained the couch of the setting sun with its crimson glory, the rainbow that spanned the pathway of the retiring storm with its sevenfold arch, might indeed for a few moments arrest a more vivid and delighted attention; but when they had finished their brief course and had sunk into silence and darkness, the lifted eye could see the same stars blooming like fire-tinted blossoms on the plains of heaven, undimmed by the darkness of a thousand storms, unchanged by the lapse of a thousand years. The perfect order in the midst of apparent confusion, the calm and mysterious constancy with which the stars kept their place in the blue vault above, must have made the rudest of men gaze with awestruck and unsatisfied wonder upon the mysterious and undecipherable scroll of the skies.

As the tribes of the human family scattered in their worldwide dispersion from the guarded gate of Eden and from the blasted plains of Shinar, in all climes and continents of the earth they saw the same unchanging blazonry upon the battlements of heaven. Wherever they chose to rest or roam—in the quiet homes clustered in the valleys or climbing the hillsides, in the silence of the desert and amid the rush and roar of tumultuous thousands in the crowded city, in the solitude of the wilderness and upon the waste of ocean—they found that the mysterious stars still kept them company without changing their place. The same bright eyes of the firmament looked down

with tender pity upon their sorrows and with piercing reproach upon their sins.

When guilty fear put out the light of holy love, and superstition usurped the place of devotion in the hearts of men, they transferred the monsters of their own morbid and darkened imaginations to the skies. They peopled the peaceful plains of heaven with "Gorgons, hydras and chimeras dire." They made the celestial host arbiters of their own destiny and gods of their own worship, in place of Him who holds the stars in his right hand.

The study of the stars should have been a science, and it should have reared a pathway of light from earth to heaven. It should have built shining steps, on which mortals might reverently climb in the ever-ascending way to the throne of the infinite Creator. But ignorance and superstition made the study of the stars a religion. They changed the myriad host into deities, whose mysterious power was supposed to rule over men with an all-pitiless destiny. They made malignant demons of the burning orbs of the sky, whose fickle favor must be secured, and whose fiery wrath must be averted by strange offerings and forbidden sacrifice.

The devotees of Baal and Ashtoreth burned incense and made night hideous with perpetual fires on the high places of the earth, in worship of the host of heaven. The Persian made altars of his mountain-tops, on which the flame of sacrifice was as constant as

the stars. He bowed himself, morning and evening, to adore the god of day, whose light the true God hath chosen for his shadow. In the valley of the Nile and of the Euphrates, amid the snow-capped mountains of Thibet, on the cold tablelands of Central Asia spotted by the moving tents of Tartar and Mongolian tribes, beneath the sunny skies of Greece and amid the cold mists of German forests, in the rude cloisters and roofless temples of Druidic and Scandinavian mythology, men studied the same awful mystery of the midnight heavens, till curiosity became superstition and students were changed to worshipers. The diagrams that recorded the positions of the heavenly bodies were exchanged for the uncouth signs and the mystic jargon of the astrologer. The lamp by which the observer studied his chart by night gave place to the perpetual fire of profane sacrifice to the sun and moon, and all the host of heaven.

Such was astronomy in the earliest and rudest age. In modern times it has become the most exact, and yet it still remains the most fascinating and sublime, of all the sciences. Familiarity with the starry worlds of the midnight sky has not rent the veil of awful mystery with which they inspired the devotion of the Egyptian and Chaldean sages. They still awaken, in the most devout and cultivated observers, emotions of the most profound and reverent interest. The astronomer has rejected the fables and superstitions of an earlier age. He makes his vast estimates of number.

time, distance and magnitude with mathematical accuracy. He avails himself of the results of three thousand years of study and a most astonishing instrumental power. And yet he cannot tell the stars for multitude, any more than he can count the sands on the sea-shore. He cannot weigh them in balances, although his calculus can take up the earth as a very little thing. He cannot reach the boundaries of creation, although he uses a measuring-line two hundred millions of miles in length, and he throws it out, length after length, over the fields of space, faster than the surveyor stretches his chain over the fields of earth. His utmost measurement of space only serves to disclose, beyond his farthest reach, still other unsounded depths and heights and universes of worlds, to which all that he has seen, measured and counted is but a grain of sand to the globe he treads upon.

It will give us exalted views of the Supreme Governor of the universe if we consider the heavens under any aspect. Let us observe especially the unchanging order of the starry host. Those burning gems, set in the infinite dome of the sky by the great Builder of worlds, maintain the same relative position which they held when the Psalmist of Israel gazed on the firmament from the heights around Bethlehem. They shine on us with the same brightness with which they gladdened the Chaldean shepherds on their mountain-tops.

Look up, on any night when the stars are clear, and you will see on its post the same sentinel star which God commanded of old to guard the throne of the eternal North. Arcturus and his sons are still circling around the Pole, as they were when the Almighty answered Job out of the whirlwind, and challenged him to lead forth that prince of the ethereal host on his way. Orion is still girt with his blazing bands as he climbs the steep ascent of the eastern sky. The sweet influences of the Pleiades are still unbound. The signs and seasons are still numbered upon the glittering belt of Mazzaroth.

There they stand, from century to century, upheld by nothing save God's invisible hand, withdrawn to an inconceivable distance from us in the silent and awful depths of space—every star a world, and many of them a million times larger than our earth—and yet there is no jar, no collision, no falling out of the ranks, no change of place. All earthly things fade and pass away. The whole order of human society has been repeatedly changed, revolutionized and set up anew while the flood of ages sweeps along. But the hosts of heaven are marshaled forth in the same symmetrical order upon the measureless fields of space. The clouds and the tempests of earth have not dimmed the light of the stars. The shock of armies and the thunder of a thousand battles have not shaken one gem from the diadem of night. No hostile hand has hurled the sons of the morning from their flaming

thrones. No revolutionary archangel has lifted the standard of discord and conflict upon the plains of heaven. God's unwearied, unaided hand still holds up the firmament with its millions of worlds. He still preserves the order, the harmony, the everlasting beauty of the infinite host.

Nation may rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. The earth may shake with the march of armies, and the day may be turned into night by the cloud of battle. It may seem to us that the foundations of order are broken up, and that universal ruin will "drive her ploughshare o'er creation." But the calm, unchanging heavens look down on us with silent pity and rebuke our fears. The unseen Hand which holds the immensity of worlds in their place can surely preserve order and fulfill its own purposes on the little spot of earth where we dwell.

Now, suppose that such thoughts occupy your mind as you consider the starry splendors of the night which God has ordained to declare his glory. You are striving to rise above all the change and conflict and confusion of earth, and to bring order and serenity into your soul by the devout contemplation of the constancy, the divine order, the sacred silence of the starry worlds above you. Suddenly you are startled by what seems the brightest of all the host of heaven rushing across the sky with furious speed, breaking the relative order and harmony with which each maintains its position and conforms its motion to that of the

whole firmament of stars, withdrawing attention from them by its own terrific light, perhaps giving forth a sound as of rushing waters or of distant thunder, and then disappearing in darkness.

That strange appearance forces upon your mind the fearful inquiry, "Can that be a lost world? Is it thus that the Almighty hurls the rebellious sons of the morning from their thrones of light? Has some incendiary archangel kindled the torch of revolution and discord upon the peaceful plains of heaven?"

Saddened and almost affrighted by the thought, you turn to look for the space which has been left void and dark by the fall of the most brilliant of the starry host. But the night has not lost a gem. Not a single ray has faded from her ancient glory. She still moves on in the same solemn silence, her train still glittering with the same magnificent garniture of worlds. That strange light was only a transient meteor, kindled and quenched in the earth's stormy and sulphurous atmosphere. It is only the mistaken glance of the moment which has led you to transfer the disorder and ruin of this groaning habitation of man to the serene and unchanging heavens.

That apparent star, which dimmed all others with its dazzling light, and which emblazoned so wide a track across the sky in its fall, was no more in distance or dimensions, when compared with the least of the real stars, than the dewdrop of the morning, which scarcely bends the slightest blade of grass, is to the ocean, which

rolls its measureless waters upon the shores of every land. And after its brief passage, when the eye looks calmly into the blue depths of night, you can still see, far beyond the region where the meteor flames and expires, far beyond the path of the solar light, the same stars shining with the same serene and awful silence still.

And surely it must be the main concern of life with us to keep ourselves at peace with Him whose unaided hand holds up the heavens with their millions of worlds. Surely it must be the height of madness to oppose the will of him who preserves the order, the harmony, the everlasting beauty of this great empire from age to age. Disobedience to him is the only discord that has ever disturbed the peace or darkened the light of the universe. Disobedience to him alone has brought misery and desolation upon our suffering world. Disobedience to him has kindled all the fires that burn, and caused all the tempests that rage in the guilty soul. To sin against God is to set oneself against the power that holds uncounted millions of worlds in their orbits. To sin against God is to stand in the way of divine purposes which are from everlasting, the fulfilment of which is the harmony and the happiness of immortal millions. To sin against God is such blindness and madness as it would be for a feeble man to lift his hand to sweep the sun from the heavens and to blot out the stars from the sky.

God makes the night, and brings forth troops of

stars upon the plains of heaven, to show us that our little world is not the whole of his kingdom, and that he will not want for subjects to celebrate his glory, though the whole race of man should renounce His service and madly say, "there is no God." Nation may rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom The earth may shake with the march of armies, and the day may be darkened with the cloud of battle. It may seem to us that the foundations of order are broken up, and that there is no voice to say with commanding power to the troubled elements, "Peace, be still." But when man's brief day of struggle and agony and death is over, the night marshals forth God's host, with all their beacon-fires still burning, upon the plains of heaven. The calm, unchanging immensity of worlds above looks down in silent and reproachful pity upon the pride and contention which shake the war-convulsed earth. Listen, O man, to the voice which comes from the untroubled deep where the sons of the morning sing upon their sapphire thrones!—

"What art thou, poor worm of the dust, that thou shouldest glory in thy strength, or spend thy puny might in working discord in the government of the God that made thee? Thou art but a mote upon the surface of the great globe which has been given thee for thy habitation. One hour of silent sunshine will do more to change the face of the earth than millions of men can do in a lifetime of toil. With all the

united force of all thine armies, thou canst not wound the fair face of the earth so deeply as one surge of the pent-up fires that burn beneath thy feet. One tremble of the earthquake, one throb in the fiery heart of the volcano, one hour of the ocean's stormy wrath, the removal of one element from the air, the water or the light, will do more to change the globe than all thine arts and engines in years of toil. And yet the whole earth of thy habitation is but a single mote in the star-dust with which God's creative hand has strewn the skies. And the night bids thee look forth upon the world-peopled plains of immensity, that thou mayst see thine insignificance and be ashamed of all thy pride."

Are you ever disposed to overrate your individual importance in the creation of God—to glory in talent, in success, in acquisitions, in personal accomplishments? Or does disappointment ever weigh heavy upon your heart, making you sometimes even doubt whether the government of the universe be sufficiently wise and strong? Go out beneath the open heavens at night, and take a lesson in faith and humility from God's great star-book of the skies. Consider whether the hand that has held millions of worlds in their place, without weariness, for thousands of centuries, needs to be strengthened by your puny might? Consider that the humblest human being on earth can enjoy the love and protection, can be adopted as the son and heir, of a Being who can make a million worlds for every par

ticle of dust that the whirlwind strews on the sunbeam, and not diminish his riches nor task his power. Consider how much reason you can have, either for pride or despondency, when the worlds of God's creation are so many that no creature can count them, and the promise of God to every soul that trusts him is so sure that he will suffer the heavens and the earth to pass away and perish, rather than fail to fulfill the desire of them that fear him. How can you fear, or murmur, or be disappointed when the calm and holy sons of the morning are ever singing into your heart the great lessons of peace, humility and trust in Him who holds the stars in his right hand, feeds the sparrow, clothes the lily, and feels an especial and paternal interest in every soul that he has created? All the power and wisdom which God displays in maintaining the order and constancy of the universe of worlds are pledged to provide for your safety and happiness, now and for ever, upon the single condition that you trust him and keep his word. What then can the greatest and wisest of men have to be proud of, what the poorest and lowest to complain of, when the safety, the glory, the blessedness of all must consist equally in possessing the favor of that infinite One whose glory is displayed by the midnight heavens, and whose handiwork is seen in the firmament of stars?

To do God's will brings divine peace and harmony into the most troubled soul. To trust God's word calms every fear and heals every sorrow of the most

afflicted heart. To study God's work sets all faculties, desires and dispositions into sweet and happy accord with the one holy and perfect Will which upholds all worlds, rules all destinies and gives all good. Oh for some mighty power, some word of infinite love, some spirit of divine reconciliation to cast out the wicked and tormenting demon of discord and disobedience from this whole world, and to bring every soul into peaceful and blessed harmony with the Will that is highest and best!

The infinite love of God has undertaken that great work of new creation. We live in the day of its progress, and faith looks forward to its completion. The cross of Christ is the divine instrumentality for accomplishing this mighty change. The utmost power and truth and glory of the gospel are in full display all around us, to bring the perfect order of the peaceful heavens—God's own divine and eternal harmony—into every soul. Let all men fully receive the healing and reconciling spirit of Jesus, and there will be no more conflict or disorder in this world than there is among the silent stars. Oh that every weary and troubled soul would look for peace to Him who wore the crown of thorns on earth, and who walks among the golden lamps of heaven!

The heavens declare the glory of God by their vastness of extent. We think it a long voyage to cross the Atlantic ocean. We should have to travel that distance ten thousand times before we could reach our

nearest planetary neighbor revolving in company with us around the sun. To reach the most remote of the little family of planets belonging to our system we must travel a million times as far as from Philadelphia to San Francisco. Our earth is twenty-five thousand miles round, and yet light flies with such inconceivable velocity that it would encompass our earth five times, while we, with "moderate haste," pronounce the word. The nearest star which we see in the heavens is so far remote that its light takes three years in reaching our eye. The light of the polar star, which guides the mariner on the ocean to-night, left its distant home before the birth of some whose heads are already gray with years. Long as the man who is ten years past middle life has lived in the world, the quenchless beam has been flying across the abyss of space, near two hundred thousand miles at every swing of the pendulum, and it reaches the mariner's eye only this moment. That ray of light is God's messenger, and it cannot be lost till it has done the errand of its destiny.

And still more than this. You have only to look up on any clear night, and you will see stars whose light has been on its journey millions of years to meet your eye. The star which you see to-night may have been blotted out of existence a million years before the creation of man. And yet the stream of light which was on its way, and by which it is seen, will continue to come for a million of years in the future.

The dimensions of the stars are as astonishing as their distance. Arcturus sends forth a flood of light five hundred times as great as our noonday. Our sun is more than a million times as large as our earth, and yet one star in the Pleiades is equal in glory to twelve hundred of our suns. And there are eighteen millions of suns in the system to which our sun belongs as one. And astronomers have discovered four thousand such systems—seventy-two thousand millions of suns, and every sun doubtless surrounded by a thousand lesser worlds.

And every increase of power in the telescope increases the number of suns and systems that blaze upon the eye, and confound all our conceptions of number and distance and dimensions. The most learned and accurate observer—the one who has the greatest command of instruments and methods of calculation—is most astonished and overwhelmed by the immensity of God's works in the starry heavens. If we had the intelligence of archangels, and could fly with the swiftness of light, and we should spend millions of years in traveling from world to world surveying the works of God, we should still be compelled to say, with more meaning than Job, "Lo, these are parts of his ways, but how little a portion is heard of him? But the thunder of his power who can understand?"

Let me ask you to look steadily at yonder star, which, for the sake of distinction, we say, is in the sword of Orion. The night is clear and your eye is

good. See, now it assumes an indefiniteness not common to small stars. Now look through this small telescope, with which beginners feel their way through the bewildering maze of careering worlds. Lo, now it has lost all the aspect of a star and become a diffused haze—a floating mist. Now turn to this instrument of greater power. Still you see nothing but a ghostly mist, towering up into the most strange and fantastic forms, with wide-branching arms extended as if groping for prey in the infinite darkness of space, and with an awful mouth, gaping wide enough to swallow a million worlds. Again, we suppose ourselves standing with Sir John Herschel under the brilliant dome of a South African sky, begging the opportunity to look through the mighty instrument with which he surveys the heavens in that transparent air. Still, we find no trace of a star—nothing but the same awful, misty arms stretched out over the dismal blackness of space; the same horrid mouth opening beneath a forehead decked with a misty plume, armed with a horn millions of leagues in length, and gashed with an abysmal chasm which it would take light centuries to cross.

Undaunted by the obstinacy with which the mysterious mist refuses to disclose the secret of its form and constitution, we call to our aid a still higher power with which to pierce the awful darkness of space. Lord Rosse lends us the use of his great mirror of four tons weight to gather the pale light from the awful monster whose faintly phosphorescent form lies afloat in the infi-

nite ocean of immensity. And yet there it is still— a dim, cloudy haze, extending through immeasurable reaches of space, without a trace of a star; more brilliant indeed in some of its parts, with some of its misty outlines at the centre broken up, and innumerable streamers floating off in every direction from the sides; but still a nebula, a filmy smoke, out of which the mighty Rossian telescope cannot kindle up the shining spark or the pointed flame of a single star.

One trial more. Slowly and reverently we ascend the watch-tower from which the great refractor at Cambridge looks out upon the evening sky. We take our seat in the observer's chair with deep awe, for we are in the presence of the Infinite—we are covered by the shadow of Eternity. Now, at last, we see the great sight for which hitherto we have sought in vain. The misty cloud bursts into a blaze of distinct stars. The awful nebula that, like some Oriental monarch, had inflamed and baffled all curiosity by withdrawing itself into the far depths of its infinite habitation, at last lifts up its cloudy veil and looks forth with its million eyes to reward the reverent and eager search of man. The misty horror of the previous indistinct form, like the monsters of old superstitions, kindles into robes of beauty and crowns of glory before the penetrating gaze of the great glassy eye with which we now sweep the heavens. And the light which tells us that the nebulous star in the sword of Orion is a system of worlds has been flying ten millions of miles

a minute, for sixty thousand years, to bring us that message.

There are countless nebulæ, like that in Orion, every one of which is a universe of worlds, so numerous that, at their immeasurable distance, they seem through the telescope to be thick as the shining particles of dust strewn on the sunbeam by a gust of wind sweeping along a dry and sandy road. And these fleecy clouds, together with the brightest stars in the firmament, are so far remote that, if we should take the beams of the morning for wings, and fly as fast and as far as light can travel in ten years, moving ten millions of miles a minute, and then look up, we should still see Orion blazing in the eastern sky at his wonted hour, and Arcturus and his sons maintaining their solemn march around the Pole.

The telescope, in its greatest power, penetrates five hundred times farther into the depths of space than the unassisted eye. We can see without its help stars and nebulæ so remote that no calculations of the astronomer can estimate their distance. And yet the great telescope shows us one hundred and twenty-five millions of such heavens as the Psalmist saw. The astronomer sees the sky in every direction powdered with stars, strewn through the fields of space thick as the rain-drops. Every addition to the power of instruments only increases proportionally the number of stars, suns, systems that are seen. We are warranted, therefore, in the inference that all that the

human eye has yet seen by the aid of the mightiest instruments is but a point, a single grain, amid the infinitude of worlds and universes which have been formed by the all-creating hand, and which are upheld by the all-sustaining word, of God.

Our earth supports one thousand millions of human beings. And yet there are living creatures, perfectly formed, with a full set of faculties, so small, so numerous, that it would take eight hundred millions of worlds like ours to contain a human population equal to the number of those creatures which can live and move in one cubic inch of space. Some of these inconceivably small creatures multiply at the rate of one hundred and seventy thousand millions in a hundred hours. Every one of them has a distinct and independent life, and every one of them is cared for by Him who feeds the sparrow, numbers the hairs of our heads and upholds all worlds with the word of his power.

And surely He who has multiplied forms of life beyond all finite conception in this world, has not left the countless millions of worlds in his great kingdom without living inhabitants to enjoy his gifts and to declare his glory. If the greatest astronomer cannot count or measure the suns and systems that blaze in the midnight heavens because they are so many, so vast, so far remote, how much less can we conceive the numbers and orders and generations of living creatures for whom the great creating Father hath provided

habitations and happiness in all the universe of worlds which declare his glory!

This one mighty God claims and deserves our first and loftiest thought, our purest and most intense affection. The measureless fields and the unfathomed abysses of space are all ablaze with his glory. And shall we not worship him? Shall we not sound forth his praise to the ends of the earth? His will is the sole law which suns and systems obey as they move in their orderly march upon the fields of immensity from age to age. And shall we set up our will against his? Shall we enter into conflict with Him who is the source of all power, and from whose heart of infinite love flow forth waves of blessing to every creature in the universe?

There is no madness so extreme, there is no blindness so dark and terrible and debasing, as that of the man who will not see the witness of God in his wondrous works. Every faculty of our being, every means of existence and happiness, every comfort and blessing of life, comes from God. And shall we take the gift yet deny the Giver? God's creative power has called into existence every ray of light that shines and every system of worlds that rolls in immensity. The breath of the Almighty has given life to the smallest insect and to the mightiest archangel. Creatures so minute that millions sport in the drop of water, suns so vast that their light is a thousand times greater than our noonday, are all held, moment by moment, in God's

hand. And shall we, frail children of the dust as we are, and crushed before the moth, shall we entertain the thought of living without God?

The heavens declare the glory of God by directing all our observations to one common centre of power and motion and life for all creatures and all worlds. The moon revolves around our earth. The earth, with its associate planets, revolves around the sun. The sun, with all its circling planets, moons, asteroids, comets, is rushing along upon a still mightier orbit, thirty-three millions of miles in a year, in a revolution which it will take eighteen hundred thousand years to accomplish. All the infinite host of heaven is grouped into clusters and systems, that revolve, orbit within orbit and world around world, until a firmament of millions of suns is balanced by another as great, and all go sweeping together around some mightier centre; and so suns, whose light has been millions of years in reaching us, are all rushing, as if driven by hurricanes of infinite power, round some mysterious centre still mightier, still more remote.

Thus all the way up, through moons and planets and suns and systems and universes, the whole immensity of worlds is yielding obedience to some far remote and mighty Power, whose mysterious source we cannot find, whose living presence is everywhere, whose supreme authority is felt in every soul. When we sweep the heavens with the mightiest telescope, and we look with dazzled eye and aching brain amid the infinite blaze of

worlds to find the one central throne, around which all suns and systems revolve, a voice comes from the abysses and the ages of eternity, saying, "Canst thou by searching find out God? Canst thou find out the Almighty to perfection? It is high as heaven; what canst thou do? Deeper than hell; what canst thou know?"

Such is the immensity of the creation of God; such the inconceivable length of the time through which he carries forward his mighty works; such the greatness of the power which he puts forth in maintaining the harmony of his boundless empire. What, then, is man that the Sovereign of so many worlds should be mindful of him?

To this question science and revelation each has its own answer. Science, as if afraid that the telescope would make skeptics of us all, brings the microscope to its aid, and turns our attention from the inconceivably great to the inconceivably small. It shows us that the worlds below us are as infinite as those above. It shows us that creative wisdom is as clearly manifest in creatures so small that they cannot be seen by the unassisted eye, as in the systems of worlds so numerous, so far remote that they seem like dust strewn on the evening sky. Science, having dazzled our vision and bewildered our minds with the infinite blaze of suns and systems of worlds, shows us millions of perfectly organized beings in a drop of water. We see that their structure, their faculties, their means of support and modes of living, have all

been cared for by the infinite Creator. And we do not hesitate to say that the God who cares for creatures so small will be more mindful of man.

Revelation teaches us to call the Maker of all worlds our Father, and to believe that he cares for us with more than an earthly parent's love. Revelation teaches us that our Father has actually given an infinite price that he may win our confidence and hold the first place in our hearts. And we are happy at last to believe that God, who made the heavens and the earth and breathed the breath of immortality into man's soul, is so great as to surpass all finite comprehension. We can ask infinite blessings of him, without fearing that his bounty will ever be exhausted with giving. We can trust in his protection, with the assurance that we can never go beyond the reach of his hand. We can call upon him in the time of trouble, and never fear that he will be too far remote to hear our cry. In the day of calamity we can shelter ourselves beneath the shadow of his throne, and he will cover us in his secret place till the tempest is past.

This great God, whose glory shines from the heavens and whose power upholds millions of worlds, is our Father. You have only to love him, and be as a little child in faith and affection, and he will pledge the promise of his immutable word and the riches of his infinite empire that you shall never want for any good thing. You have only to become like the meek and lowly Christ in heart and life, and God will make you

an heir of his kingdom with his own Son, and you shall possess and enjoy that infinite inheritance for ever.

You have only to learn diligently and cheerfully the lessons which God's word and providence now set before you, and by and by the veil will be lifted, the doors of your Father's house will be thrown open, and you shall be free to range through all its million-fold mansions; you shall have full access to all its infinite delights. Wings of light shall be given you to fly with, angels shall stand ready to bear you company in traversing God's mighty kingdom; and as they lead you on and show you the way, they shall tell you all that they have learned in thousands of years of study. With a wing that never tires, and a curiosity that is never satisfied, you shall sweep on with the blaze of suns upon your path and the rush of planets around you. With the immortal sons of the morning for your guides you shall pass over immeasurable reaches of space, where towering constellations scale the heights of eternity, where infinite abysses of starry worlds are swallowed up in depths unfathomable. And before you shall be the life of everlasting ages, in which to learn how much God has done for his own glory and his creature's good.

And in the midst of all the splendors of that mighty habitation, whose apartments are suns and systems of worlds, exalted upon the central throne in some great capital of universal empire, you shall see One like unto the Son of man. And when you behold

his face, and you see upon his hands the scars of the conflict through which he passed in this world, that he might bring you to that high and holy habitation, you will understand better than you do now how much the Infinite God loved the lost race of man, in giving his divine Son to the shame and agony of the cross, that he might bring many sons to the glory and blessedness of heaven. You will understand better than you do now that it is infinite gain to win Christ at whatever cost, but that it is infinite loss to win the world and lose the soul.

God's Wonders in the Deep.

These see his wonders in the deep.—Ps. cvii 24.

THE LAST PLANK

II.

GOD'S WONDERS IN THE DEEP.

THE books of the Bible were not written among a seafaring people, and yet they abound in beautiful and expressive allusions to the sea. The blue waves of the Mediterranean could be seen by shepherds and vintagers from all the high places of Palestine. They could see the sun go down at the close of the day and set the plain of waters ablaze with his parting glory. They could watch the gathering darkness of the storm as it came out of the west, at first no bigger than a man's hand, and soon blackening the whole heavens with clouds. They could rest secure in their distant homes, while the tempest ploughed the sea into foam along its path, and rushed upon the rocky face of Carmel and the wooded heights of Lebanon with the howl of fighting winds and the peal of rattling thunders. And yet few of the inhabitants of the land had ever exchanged the sheepwalks of the wilderness for the unsteady paths of the sea. The distant prospect lent the charm of mystery to the world of waters, and so led psalmists and prophets the more frequently to clothe the divine message with the sublime drapery of the deep.

In their inspired compositions the most striking spiritual truths are set forth in language drawn from the signs and aspects of the sea. The greatest earthly blessings are blessings of the deep. The mightiest voice is that which drieth up the deep and stilleth the noise of the waves. The most awful affliction is that which the sufferer describes by saying that wave follows wave and deep calleth unto deep, and all the billows of calamity have gone over his soul. It is the most joyful deliverance to the oppressed when Jehovah rideth upon horses and chariots of salvation through the sea. The greatest dominion is that which extends from sea to sea. The most distant flight of the beams of the morning is unto the uttermost parts of the sea. The grandest triumph of the latter day shall be the conversion of the abundance of the sea. The crowning ascription of power and glory unto the Lamb of God shall come up, like the sound of many waters, from every creature in the sea.

The progress of knowledge in later times only leads us to wonder at the propriety and expressiveness of language used by writers who had never seen the ocean, and whose knowledge of the sea was confined to observations from the shore. We have learned to call the ocean the "image of eternity" and the "throne of the Invisible." We permit the poet to say that it is "boundless, endless and sublime." And yet our more ambitious modes of speech in modern times can add little to what was so well expressed of old by dwellers

among the hills and by wanderers in the desert. To us, as well as to them, the sea is full of wonders. It is terrible in wrath; it is awful in beauty; it is burnished like the body of heaven in its brightness. It has all the moods of sensitive genius, and all the majesty of sovereign power. It fascinates and it repels. It delights and it terrifies. It scatters smiles like the raindrops falling in the sunshine, and it darkens the heavens with the frowns of its wrath. It allures us to its mighty arms with the arts and caresses of a gentle mother, and then, when we trust ourselves to its heaving bosom, it tosses us up and down, day and night, with wild and boisterous vehemence, till we are weary of life. When lashed into fury by the merciless winds, it tears the strong ship in pieces as the lion tears the lamb. In its paroxysms of rage and madness it lifts up its cruel hands and hurls the mariner to a watery grave, without heeding his drowning cry. It plunders the white-winged heralds of commerce in their passage across its plains, and then it casts both the passenger and the prey in contempt on the shore. When the hour of its wild passion is past, it moans with melancholy voice along all its desolate shores, as if sorrowing over the destruction which its wrath has made.

The progress of knowledge in modern times has only multiplied the wonders of the sea and added beauty and attractiveness to the veil of its mystery. Every day we are surrounded by the power of the sea; we

are supported by the abundance of the sea; we are using figurative language suggested by the changing signs and aspects of the sea. It will be a sacred and profitable lesson for us to walk upon the sounding shore, and gather up here and there a shining pearl or a beautiful shell, which the great deep has thrown out from its treasure-house of wonders and mysteries.

The prophet of Israel declared that in the golden and glorious age of the future Zion shall be enriched with the abundance of the sea. Nevertheless, the ancient poets among the Greeks sang of the "barren sea;" and traditional usage in our more practical and economic age speaks of the "waste of waters." The most advanced science of our times proves that the prophet was right and both the poets and economists wrong. The sea is not barren, neither is the world of waters a waste. It is the deep alone which prevents the earth from becoming a desert. The forests on the mountains, the grass on the plains and the cattle upon a thousand hills, all derive their life and daily subsistence from the sea. Three-fourths of the entire surface of the globe are covered with water, to be an exhaustless treasury of life and health and riches to everything that lives and grows on the remaining fourth of dry land.

Astronomy shows us the moon to tell us what kind of a world we should have without an ocean. Calling to our aid the mighty telescope, we survey the "pale empress of the starry night," and we see high

and jagged mountains shooting up into splintered and volcanic peaks, with fragments of shattered crags lying at their base. We look down into dark, empty hollows with perpendicular walls ten thousand feet high. We measure long reaches of narrow defiles and waterless valleys, as rugged as the blasted and thunder-smitten heights with which they are surrounded. We peer into extinct craters from which the fires of volcanic rage have ceased to burn, leaving the whole region covered with the ashes of desolation. Seen through the great telescope, the full moon has the appearance of a torn and blasted world, a doomed satellite, suffocated by the sulphurous breath of its own self-torturing volcanoes; manless, treeless, lifeless—a stony chaos of death—a caverned and abysmal realm of the most complete and terrible desolation.

If it were not for the deep the earth would become like the moon—a wilderness of death, a chaos of cold mountains and jagged rocks and blackened cinders and barren sands, without a bird to sing in its solitudes or a flower to relieve its desolation. The sun lifts the waters of the sea into the air, the winds waft the burden over all the land, the clouds form and the rain falls, and so vegetation is kept alive and food is supplied for every living thing. The giant cedar which wrestles with the storms of a thousand years, and the delicate flower that blooms and dies in a day; the monarch of the forest that spreads dismay with his midnight roar, and the timorous dove that flies to the

habitation of man to escape the bird of prey; the leviathan whose floating form seems like some small island on the surface of the deep, and the animalcules that sport by millions in the drop of water,—all derive their life and their support from the sea.

The sea is the source of the rivers—not the rivers of the sea. The Psalmist is right when he says that the waters go up by the mountains, although we say that all streams run into the sea. They must first go up to the high places of the hills on the wings of the wind, or they would never come back singing on their way to their home in the deep. The sun lays up exhaustless treasures of water in the air against the day of drought and famine. All the machinery of man, pumping and groaning night and day through all the year, could not carry as much water to the fountains and spring-heads among the hills as the sun and the air carry in the silent hour of a summer's noon.

We live and breathe every day beneath an invisible ocean, which would deluge the earth and destroy all the habitations of men in a moment if it should fall upon us. All the water in the rivers comes from the air, and all the water in the air comes from the sea. So that we are indebted to the sea for all the riches that the rain and the rivers supply. The blessing of the deep is above us and around us every moment. It falls from the sky in every shower of rain. It springs up from the earth in every blade of grass. It breathes forth upon the air in the fragrance of every flower.

It calls for gratitude to our heavenly Father in every gift of daily bread. It comes in at our open window in the freshness of the morning air. It builds a gallery of beauty for all eyes to behold in the blue sky and the gorgeous clouds and the green earth. It waves in the golden harvest; it murmurs in the solemn woods; it sings in the joyous brooks; it whispers in the rustling leaves; it distills in the silent dews; it rushes and roars in the great rain; it comes forth in gladness upon the wings of the morning; it shines in every hue of the showery arch; it surrounds us with goodness and mercy all our days.

The ocean must have great riches, or it could not support its own inhabitants; and yet it has a superabundance for the supply of all the inhabitants of the dry land. A thimbleful of sea water will often contain a living population equal in number to all the human beings that have lived upon the face of all the earth since the creation of Adam. If we should take only one of each species of animals living in the sea, the collection would equal the numbers of an exceeding great army. The armies of the deep march in their migrations millions abreast. The mighty procession, moving at a rapid rate, will continue to pass the same point and in the same direction for more than sixty days and nights without interruption. If one should stand to number the migratory army as it passes, he would have to count a million a minute, and to keep counting uninterruptedly from April to July.

All the swarming millions of the deep feed upon its own resources, and it is only the superabundance of its bounty that supports the lesser millions of the living on the land. The eager pursuit of the hunter and the advancing march of civilization may drive the deer from the forests and the bison from the prairies; the primitive oaks may fall before the woodman's axe; the virgin gold may be gathered from all the river-beds among the mountains. But all the nations of the earth cannot exhaust the abundance of the seas. The Infinite Creator has filled the deep with countless myriads of living creatures, not only because he would provide an exhaustless storehouse of food for man, but because he delights in the multiplication of all forms of life; he rejoices in giving the capacity and the means of enjoyment to the lowest as well as to the loftiest of all his creatures. The great Master of life builds the steps of being slowly upward, from the slimy creature whose body evaporates like dew in the sun, to the immortal mind of man and the mightier powers of the archangel that bows and burns before the throne in heaven. All this boundless living creation depends on him for support, and he fills all with food and gladness.

The deep affords a grand field for the display of the divine power. Apparently, nothing is more unstable than the waters. In popular language, the sea is the symbol of restlessness, of perpetual change and aimless conflict. Men who waste their lives in vain struggles

after happiness are compared to the troubled sea when it cannot rest. The voice of the sea is as the voice of a chained giant, lashed into madness by the unresting winds and bound to the cold rock. All the elements of strife find their home on the deep, and when one has exhausted its fury, another takes up the scourge and summons the groaning giant to torture. And the change and conflict through which the deep passes in all its varied aspects of light and darkness, breeze and gale and storm, consist only in an ever-involved and aimless repetition of the same forms, a ceaseless surging to and fro, without permanent advance or retreat. The weed or floating wreck is indeed borne onward to far-distant shores. But the sea itself abides as if chained in its secret caves, groaning beneath the lash of the merciless winds, and tossing its strong hands on high in the convulsions of a restless and perpetual agony.

Thus the very restlessness of the deep impresses us the more with the greatness and with the steady grasp of the power which keeps it unchanged from age to age. In fact, we find the most expressive symbol of immutability in the stars and the sea. The Psalmist was right when he said that God has founded the solid earth upon the seas and established it upon the floods. Philosophers have at last found that there is more truth in David's inspired words than he himself could have known. The stability of the ocean is a perpetual miracle of divine power. It can be kept within its appointed bounds only by Him who is able to hold its

waters in the hollow of his hand. The display of power in keeping the sea in place is so great, so constant, so wonderful, that the solid earth needs no other foundation. The great globe itself must obey the voice, which says to the deep, "Thus far shalt thou come and no farther, and here shall thy proud waves be stayed."

The storm ploughs the sea with terrible fury. The shores are often almost upon a level with the waters. The tidal wave travels on the ocean as fast as the moon moves in heaven. The earth whirls on its axis forty times faster than the swift train flies upon the iron track. If there should be a momentary jar or stoppage, or derangement in any of these great movements and forces, the sea would rush upon the land and the mountains would be covered with another deluge. Fill a shallow basin with water to the brim, and then try to carry it swiftly in your hand without allowing a drop to run over, and then consider what power, what attention, what perfect balancing of forces must be requisite to carry all the oceans of the earth in their shallow beds through space a thousand times faster than the eagle flies, and yet not let the water run over upon the land. Such a wonder of power is God displaying every moment in keeping the deep within bounds.

And this balancing of forces, which binds the sea in its bed and marks its place and form as sure as the solid earth, extends through the universe of worlds,

and runs through unmeasured, uncounted cycles of years. When, therefore, we say that the earth is founded upon the seas and established upon the floods, we declare that the earth is kept in its place by the wonder of Divine power which gives stability to the ocean, holds the stars in the firmament and controls every particle of matter in the universe.

To the inexperienced voyager nothing seems more capricious and utterly without law and order than the winds and the waves. To him the ocean seems the home of the most anarchical and ungovernable power. There he is, plunging and ploughing his way over the level and limitless expanse of the waters. There is nothing to be seen but the blue dome of the sky above and the blue plain of the sea beneath. No situation in the world is better fitted to produce the feeling of utter loneliness and desolation. To be sure, the ship itself may be full of life and motion and power. The number of human beings on board may be large enough to make it seem as if home and society and the common relations of human kind were all there. But when the voyager looks away from his floating habitation, above, below, around, and asks, "Where am I? and whither am I going? and what has become of the great world of business and life and thought which so lately surrounded me?" then he begins to think how lonely a thing is a solitary ship upon the boundless desert of the sea. The sky above and the waters beneath present the same aspect for successive days.

There is no landmark, no fixed object in sight to tell him that he is making progress in any direction or that he will ever gain a safe harbor. He does not need to be a very sensitive man to ask, "Whence shall we derive the prophet's vision, the superhuman science with which to find the connecting chain binding us still to life and humanity amid the world of waters? Who can tell us that we are not already lost upon this heaving plain of unvarying and infinite desolation? Who can say that green fields and happy homes are not already for ever beyond our reach, and that we are not doomed to wander round and round in never-ending circles, till we all perish together on this immeasurable and melancholy desert of the sea?"

All such questions are answered for the inexperienced voyager when the officer of the deck takes his instrument at noonday and directs his eye away, a hundred million of miles to the sun, and brings down from that great globe of fire the secret which the earth and sea cannot reveal. The skillful navigator is confident that he can tell, within the fraction of a mile, his precise position on the ocean, with nothing but the record of his rate of sailing and the observed position of the sun in the heavens to help him in his calculations.

With what perfect order and constancy must the one Infinite mind maintain the whole course of nature, when so slight a thing as the determination of the ship's place on the pathless sea may depend upon the

regularity with which a globe a million times larger than the earth shall keep its course in the heavens? How constantly and accurately the greatest objects and forces in nature are made to render the least and commonest services to man! And shall we hesitate to obey a Being whose will is the source of all power, whose law is the harmony of the universe, and whose delight is in the happiness of his creatures? Shall we fear to trust ourselves to the protection of Him who is ever ready to receive us under the shadow of his throne, and whose presence shall be with us in the uttermost parts of creation?

I remember, one day, as I stood leaning over the bulwarks, searching, with bewildered and aching eye, for some object to diversify the dreary waste of waters, I saw a small land-bird flying after the ship. For some time the little creatrue beat up and down, as if weary and lost, not daring to come on board, and yet not able, like the sea-gull, to rest on the wing or float on the water. At length, as if emboldened by despair, it alighted on deck, passed around among the people, and eagerly picked up the crumbs that had been dropped from our overloaded table. Was it a part of the plan of the infinite Father, without whom not a sparrow falls to the ground, that our great ship, with its wasteful superabundance of food, should pass that way over the waste of waters just at that particular hour, to give rest and food to that poor, lost and weary wanderer from the land? Or is it more befitting the

comparative importance of things to say that the little bird was directed to the path of the ship by that eternal Providence to which nothing can be too minute to receive attention, nothing too difficult to accomplish? Or shall the philosopher tell me that such things are all determined by immutable and impersonal law, and that only the weakness of human hopes can refer them to the desires and purposes of a free, intelligent, all-ruling mind? Or, will the skeptic take comfort to his cold heart, by saying, that chance rules all, and there is no such thing as mind, purpose or feeling governing the universe and deciding the destiny of every creature?

I leave the mysteries of faith and the abstractions of philosophy to those who can solve them best; but I was willing to believe that one reason why the Infinite Father had directed that little bird to seek a shelter on our ship, was to remind me that I was not yet out of the reach of the Hand which feeds a sparrow, measures the deep and holds the worlds in the firmament of heaven. I was glad to learn a new lesson in the theology of faith and trust from that little creature, for the relief of whose hunger God had sent out the mighty ship into mid-ocean. And when night came on, and darkness covered the sea, and the storm lashed the deep with its black wings, as I watched alone upon the plunging and wave-swept deck, and myself and the great ship seemed but a mote which the merciless waters might swallow up in a moment, and leave not a

trace of our burial, then I could say with new assurance, "The Being who takes pleasure in preserving and beautifying a bird or a blossom will not forget me."

While at home, with all the occupations of daily life and all the diversions of society to engage our attention, we talk of subduing the elements and of passing the ocean as if it were a holiday swing from continent to continent. The enthusiastic traveler, who is about to have his first experience on the world of waters, examines the strong ship while it lies motionless at the wharf. The deck seems as firm beneath his foot as the stone pavement of the street. The stern and prow and sides, braced with beams of oak and bars of iron, seem like an impenetrable shield against all the assaults of the winds and waves. The mighty engine, with its tireless arms and fiery heart, is prepared to blow the breath of defiance in the face of the wildest storm. The whole structure is a loud proclamation of man's triumph over the elements of nature.

With such impressions the voyager embarks, full of hope and buoyant expectation, scarcely thinking that the occasion calls for an especial committal of himself to Him who holds the deep in the hollow of his hand. The strong ship strikes out upon its chosen path across the deep. The booming cannon thunders the loud farewell, and the happy voyager can no longer hear the voices of friends invoking blessings on his departure. The harbor is cleared, and the high places of the shore gradually go down behind the encompass-

ing circle of waters. The winds blow softly as the breath of a summer's eve, and the waves of the deep are only as dimples on the face of beauty, increasing its charm by giving diversity and expression to every feature.

The quiet aspect of everything around him, and the easy, home-like, social life going on within the ship, make the impression upon the mind of the inexperienced voyager that going to sea is a very commonplace affair. It seems to him that he cannot be very far from shore, and that he shall see the land in one direction or another as he gazes over the level plain of the water. The wild sea-birds keep him company, flapping idly to and fro with their tireless wings, as if they had no fear of going too far from a place of rest The sea-monsters plunge and sport in the distance as if enjoying the sunshine and the calm weather. The clouds of evening wear the same soft hue which, on shore, promise a fair morning and a beautiful day. When night veils the sea the starry hosts take up their orderly march upon the fields of light, and the dim horizon seems as fixed and stable as the wooded vales and the everlasting hills.

While this state of things lasts the inexperienced voyager thinks it cannot be a very serious matter to traverse the uttermost parts of the sea, hundreds of miles away from friends, home and country, with nothing but a flooring of plank between him and the unfathomable abyss. He wonders what can be the

meaning of the terrible descriptions of the ocean's greatness and power with which his youthful imagination has been filled. He is afraid that the lofty language with which the sacred Scriptures speak of the great deep must be ascribed, in part, to the imagination of a people who had never lost sight of the hills an plains of their native country.

But the time comes, sooner or later, for the voice of the Lord to speak in power and majesty upon the many waters, and to disturb the pleasant dream of passing the ocean as a holiday excursion. The deep will not fail to show the weakness and the insignificance of every structure on which man presumes to invade its proud domain. The strong-built ship, the best of a thousand to face the head wind and outride the storm, trembles in every fibre as it struggles against the shock of the billows that come on like battalions of cavalry in perpetual charge. The deep, like some wild war-horse maddened by spur and bit and impatient to throw his rider, rears and plunges and flings the ship from ridge to ridge, as if determined to shake it off and trample it down.

I remember one dark and tempestuous night, when myself traversing the paths of the deep, there came a blow upon the right side of the ship so sudden and stunning that it seemed as if every timber had been shivered and displaced from its fastenings. Immediately after the shock the vessel seemed for some moments to stand paralyzed and motionless. The engine

could not be heard. The timbers ceased to strain and creak. There was no roll nor plunge nor sound. In those moments of awful suspense many passengers held their breath as if seized with the same paralysis that had smitten the vessel. Many hearts revolved the fearful question, "Is this the silence and the calm of sinking in the depths of the sea, far below the region of waves and storms? Has the unconquerable deep risen up in the greatness of its wrath and power, and by one mighty blow that needs no second stroke smitten the fiery heart of the ship with death? Is that the rush of the waters down the hatches and along the corridors? And is this the last moment for prayer unto Him at whose voice the sea shall give up its dead? And shall the loved ones of home have no other tale to tell of all on board than that we sailed from port with bright hopes and happy adieux and were never heard of more?"

Surely it was a time to feel, in the darkness, for that Hand which holds the sea in its grasp, and leads the little child with a father's care. It was a time to learn how much it is worth to believe that God is with us in every place, and that he will keep our hearts at perfect peace while stayed on him. It was a time for the Christian voyager to break forth in the lofty hymn of faith: "Let the storm howl, and the deep lift up its voice on high. Let the laboring vessel be flung like a leaf from billow to billow; still the Hand that sustains me is almighty. The Master whom I serve can walk

upon the waves, and lay his commands upon the elements and they shall obey him. From the lowest depths his hand can lift me up. In the deepest darkness his eye of love can find me. And he would sooner break up the foundations of the earth and make dry land in the midst of the sea than suffer one soul that trusts in him to perish."

The sea is a stern master, and it teaches the great lesson of trust, and it awakens a longing for rest by the stern discipline of suffering. There is a mysterious and incurable malady which does this for the inexperienced voyager more effectually than the vastness of the sea and the might of the fetterless storms. That strange and inexplicable plague shows the wisest and the strongest what a feeble and dependent creature is man, even when he has all his arts and inventions to help him—how completely he is held in subjection to forces that he cannot control and to laws that he cannot understand.

No actual disease breaks out among the passengers. No poisonous blast has swept over the sea and corrupted the fountains of life. And yet what a change befalls the once hopeful and happy group! Pale, haggard and tottering, they creep up the stairway and stagger to the nearest seat on the heaving deck. Their soul is melted because of trouble. They reel to and fro like drunken men, and are at their wits' end. They seem like the shadows of what they were when they first came on board; unutterable wretchedness is written

in every feature. They gasp for breath in the face of the freshly-blowing wind. A strange recklessness seizes upon the weak and the strong, and binds them in fetters of the most bitter and intolerable bondage. Every organ and function of the living frame seems to conspire against Nature to make life a burden to the sufferer. Not only does his soul loathe all manner of meat. He loathes everything about him—loathes himself, and is tempted to choose death rather than life. Everything that is done to cheer his heart seems an ingenious device to increase his misery. The sweet memories of home lose their charm. The fond anticipations of the future are clothed with gloom. All the sweet uses of hope, love, kindness seem to have been reversed, as well as the functions of the body, and they all conspire to people his imagination with horrors. His sleep does not refresh him. He is scared with appalling dreams. He starts up from brief unconsciousness, panting with affright and weary with imagined contests with the demons and powers of darkness.

Once, when myself—with many others on the same ship—prostrate under the power of the mysterious scourge, I could hear in the early morning along the corridors into which the state-rooms opened, cries and groans and every expression of human anguish. Now as of a strong man struggling in his agony; now as of a feeble and sensitive woman wailing and sobbing as if in the utmost pangs of suffering nature. Sometimes the tones were piteous and imploring, as if in prayer;

sometimes hoarse and brutal, as if in blasphemy; sometimes mingled with mockery and unmeaning laughter. The ship seemed as if it had been transformed into one great prison-house, with cells for torture extending in double ranks from end to end, and in every cell a living victim, over whom some invisible and unpitying tormentor lifted the scourge continually, giving occasional respite for the recovery of strength, only that the wretched victim might be able to bear additional torture.

And what had we done to bring that terrible malady upon us? Had we drunk deadly poison? Had we inhaled invisible miasma? Had we been exposed to fatal infection? No. And nothing could be done to help us. When we summoned up all our remaining faculties to look upon our condition in a rational manner, we felt ourselves unmanned and our spirits crushed by the knowledge of the fact the one thing which we most desired—rest—was absolutely unattainable. We were ready to say in our despair, Oh for one hour of rest! Oh to stand, though it be but for a moment, upon solid ground! Oh to lie down again for one night upon a bed that does not heave and roll like this restless sea! Oh for the bare sight of anything that stands still!

But no power on earth could grant us that wish. It would have been easier to overturn the mightiest kingdom in the world than to give our floating habitation a stable position for an hour. And the bare knowledge of the fact that it was utterly impossible to rest, even

for so brief a space, sometimes seemed sufficient to drive the mind to utter despair and madness. It was while thus tossing upon the sea that I saw a new beauty and appropriateness in those words with which the Spirit of inspiration describes the blessedness of the better home: "The people of God do enter into rest." Oh, how unspeakably blessed to the weary soul, tossed upon the sea of this conflicting and tempestuous life, to enter into a state of pure, serene and endless rest! What calm and trustful assurance should it give us, amid all the wanderings and sorrows of earth, to look forward to that home where the temptations and the cares of the present cease from troubling and the weary are at rest! And if the sea had taught me no other lesson by its long and terrible chastisement, I should be grateful to my merciless master for having helped me the better to understand how great is the blessing offered by Him who says to the weary and the heavy-laden, "Come unto me and I will give you rest."

The deep is the hiding of the power which originates all motion and performs all work on the face of the earth. The water of the ocean, in running streams and elastic steam, swings all the hammers and turns all the wheels in the world. Wherever engines groan with ceaseless toil, wherever whirling spindles twist the slender thread or whizzing shuttles shoot through the growing web, wherever forges thunder and cities of workshops shake the earth with toil, there the deep is putting forth its power and taking burdens from the

shoulders and sorrows from the hearts of men. All the inventions of our time would come to naught, and every department of industry would be paralyzed, if it were not for the aid of this wild giant that God has tamed and harnessed and commanded to come up to our help out of the sea. A single one of our rivers has greater motive-power than all the horses on the continent, toiling day and night through all the year. The power which combines two elements in the composition of water, and which lies slumbering with all its energies in a single drop, is the same which heaves the mountains above the clouds, and shakes a whole continent with the subterranean thunders of the earthquake.

Popular language says nothing is so weak as water. When one would have anything forgotten he says, "Let it be written in water." And yet among all the material elements of nature there is no one so mighty, so constant, so tireless in toiling for man as water. The water has written the record of its toil upon the strata of all our mountains, upon the rounded face of all our hills and upon the rolling stones of all our fields. This serving giant, that the sea sends to the help of the land, runs on errands like a post-boy, and grinds like blind Samson in the darkness of the prison-house. It tunnels the mountain range for the railway train to pass through, and it drills the head of the finest needle. The power of the sea drives the plough on the prairie and the iron steamship in the face of its own storms. It works for centuries in digging a channel for the

mighty river through the solid rock, and it hangs a delicate bow of many colors upon the mists of the cataract. The power of the sea lifts reservoirs of water into the air, sufficient to fill all the rivers of the earth without diminishing its own fullness. It transports mountains of ice from the cold North to cool the steaming waves of the South. It sends the current of life through the finest tendrils of the vine and the gossamer filaments of thistle-down, without breaking or burdening the delicate channel in which it moves. It bedews the surface of the green leaf with drops so small that the eye cannot see them. It breaks through the barriers of the eternal hills with a force mightier than all the engines in the world. This agency of water, which the deep supplies to do our work, is the spirit of motion in all the wheels of industry; it is the ruling genius in every branch of art; it leads the van in the great march of progress and civilization for the world.

The deep is the workshop in which the Divine Architect is still carrying on the slow and secret process of building the world. The sands of the deserts have all been ground and sifted by the sea. The marble of our mantels, the stones of our sidewalks, the slates that roof our houses, and the coarser rocks on which they rest have all been compounded and shaped and hardened in the deep. The clay from which our bricks are burnt, the layers of rock from which our building materials are quarried, the fruitful soil out of which all our timber grows, have all been built up out of the sea.

The deep has left the record of its former dominion on the tops of the high mountains as well as in the depths of the green valleys. Every particle of sand in the soil has been ground from the solid rock by the surging of the sea. Every smooth stone in the harvest-field has been rolled upon the floor of the deep. Every loose boulder that lies upon the surface of the earth has been lifted up and carried in the strong hand of the sea. The mines of coal and iron and the secret veins of gold and silver were once stored in the treasures of the deep. In the process of time they were brought forth from the hidden chambers for use to man by the Divine Architect, the hiding of whose power is still in the sea—whose work of building and furnishing the world extends through countless ages. In the silent chambers of the deep still dwells and toils the mighty power which lifted the mountains above the clouds, and laid the solid floor of islands and continents for the forests to grow upon and the fields to bring forth their harvests.

It would be impossible to describe, or even to name, all of God's wonders in the deep. We have dwelt upon two—*riches* and *power*. But these alone are sufficient to give sacredness and solemnity to all our meditations upon the deep. If we regard it as the throne of God's power for the government of the world, it is not the less the storehouse of his bounty for the supply of every living thing. The sea encircles the earth with an everlasting hymn, proclaiming in gentle whispers and in mighty thunders that its builder and maker is God.

It is but a feeble type, a single manifestation, of the beneficence ever flowing forth from the Infinite Father, ever filling the universe with blessing, ever calling for ceaseless gratitude and praise.

If the power of the sea were let loose upon the land, it would sweep every human being from the face of the earth, and yet that power is kept in check with infinite ease by Him who holds the stars in his right hand. Let us rejoice that there is One who can rule the raging of the seas with his voice, and make the mightiest agencies in nature work together for our advantage. Let us see to it that we are on terms of friendship and agreement with Him who founded the earth upon the seas, and who measures the waters of the deep in the hollow of his hand. Let us ever look, with hope and longing desire, to that better country where the abundance of the deep shall give place to everlasting riches, and the wonders of the deep shall be surpassed by greater wonders in the infinite ocean of the divine love.

Mountains of God.

Thy righteousness is like the mountains of God.—Ps. xxxvi. 6.

THE STRENGTH OF THE HILLS

III.

MOUNTAINS OF GOD.

THE sacred and life-like language of the ancient Hebrews ascribed all great and marvelous things to God. The Divine name was bound up with the names of the stars, the mountains, the rivers, the winds, the forests. Instead of saying that the mountains are glorious in beauty, impregnable in strength, eternal in years, the Hebrew called them mountains of God. God himself is the infinite realization of that greatness and beauty which we ascribe to his most mighty works. And the first language of man, which was learned from the divine voice in Paradise, gave such names to the most conspicuous objects and phenomena of nature that the bare word should affirm the reality of God's existence and the greatness of his power. When the first pair, in their simple and sinless state, looked forth upon a world everywhere inscribed with the Creator's name, they felt themselves to be surrounded with his presence and covered with the overshadowings of his glory. The child of the first parents learned to speak of God in learning the names of the first objects that met his eye and the deepest experiences of his own heart.

And the disposition to ascribe a sublime and sacred meaning to great objects and phenomena in nature was not wholly lost with the first language and the Paradisiacal state. Among all nations great mountains would readily be taken as fit representatives of the immutable righteousness of the infinite God. He has set fast the mountains, girding them with power, so that no arm less than almighty can remove them out of their place. They rise up before us, in awful and unchanging majesty, to tell us, with the roar of a thousand torrents and the voice of many thunders, that God changes not, and there is no variableness nor shadow of turning in his immutable word.

Conceive a range of mountains extending the whole length of a continent, piled up in one unbroken wall of rock above the region of the clouds, resting upon a base broad enough to cover a whole kingdom. Conceive the power sufficient to uproot that adamantine barrier from its deep foundation and hurl it into the midst of the ocean. Such an act of power would be easier to perform than to defeat or change that word of promise by which God engages to fulfill the desire of them that fear him in all generations. You have only to trust in his freely-offered protection and you are safe, though the foundations of the earth should be broken up and the heavens should pass away with a great noise. The trials of life are severe; the temptations of the world are many; the temptations of our own hearts are more; the path of duty is beset with

obstacles at every step. But such hindrances are like the small dust of the earth and the chaff before the whirlwind, compared with our defence, when once the great promise of God has become our reliance and our protection.

Go climb with toilsome endeavor to the thunder-smitten heights of the great mountains. Look forth from those rocky battlements which the fighting winds have stormed against for a thousand centuries, yet never shaken. Can you beat them down to the small dust of the plain with the stamping of your foot? Can you blow them away with your breath, as the winds blow the leaves of autumn? You could a thousand times easier do that than snatch one poor suffering child of faith from the protecting hand of the Almighty. You could more easily blow the Andes into the ocean with a breath than fail of eternal life when trusting in Him who alone has the infinite blessing to give. And on the other hand, does the tempter whisper the suggestion, that for a time at least something may be gained by venturing upon the path of disobedience to God—something may be lost by a life of sacrifice in his service? Nay, tell me that you can hush the thunders of the storm with your word—tell me that you can imprison the lightnings of heaven in your fist—tell me that you can crush the everlasting mountains with the blow of your hand, and I will believe you—I will think you a sane and truthful man—sooner than I would if you say, I have hardened myself against God and

prospered; I have transgressed his word and found profit and peace in my sin.

Many travelers have gazed with wonder and delight upon the profile of a human face of colossal dimensions, carved by Nature's handiwork upon a projecting cliff of a lofty mountain in the Franconia Notch. The look is upward to the open heavens, as if in the act of devotion. Day and night, through all the year, in storm and in sunshine, from century to century, that reverent and awful face has been looking into the deep immensity of heaven, as if it were some great hierarch appointed to offer to God the perpetual worship of the everlasting hills. Its aspect of calm and trustful adoration is ever the same. When deep night veils the heavens, when fighting storms launch their thunderbolts from height to height, when the morning pours new glories upon the mountains, when the broad noon bathes the valleys in silent light, that adoring countenance is still turned toward heaven and God.

While gazing upon that silent symbol of perpetual adoration, who would not wish for the faith which turns with like calmness and constancy to the everlasting hills for help? The pathway of life is checkered with an ever-changing light. The glory of the morning, the brightness of noon, the darkness of night and the storm play around us with varied and unforeseen succession through all our course. God ever lives. His word of promise is more immutable than his own great mountains. The mountains shall depart and the

hills shall be removed, but his kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of his peace be removed from the heart that turns to him with the longings of love and the constancy of faith. And if we ever gain a complete mastery over temptation, if we ever succeed in casting out all fear and trouble and anxiety from our hearts, if we ever find sacred and satisfying rest to our souls, it will be only when we learn to look upward to God for guidance and help with as much constancy as the rock-hewn face of Franconia looks to the clouds and the sky.

I have stood on the top of the high mountain when the sun was up in heaven filling the world with his glorious light. As I gazed around and beneath, I saw clouds ridged and rolling like the billows of the sea. I saw them far off and far beneath, advancing toward the rocky height on which I stood. In the distance they seemed like mighty masses of Parian marble, white as the drifted snow in the noonday sun. It was a delight to watch their ever-changing beauty as they sailed upon the viewless air. The play of imagination easily transformed them into the white thrones of the cherubim; then again they seemed like the streaming banners of the armies of heaven; and now, behold chariots of fire and horses of fire advancing with such resistless might as to sweep away the summits of the eternal hills in their march.

By and by they approached and smote the sides of the mountain far beneath, and then rolled upward

swiftly, silently till they reached the summit and shut out the light of the sun with their shadow. And then the bright forms, which seemed so mighty and glorious in the distance, proved to be nothing but a driving, darkening mist, a mere mass of shapeless vapor, disfiguring everything with its touch, and leaving no trace of beauty for the eye to rest upon while it went sweeping by. But in a moment the mist was gone. Again the sun shone clear and bright upon the bald mountain. Again I could see the cloud as it rolled down the rugged steep till the air was of sufficient density to bear its weight. Then, again, it put on the shape and hues of glorious beauty, and sailed away in serene and gentle majesty upon the wings of the wind.

And I said aloud in the solitude, This is a picture of human life. So do all the forms of temptation appear, fascinating in the distance and worthless in possession. When the tempter allures from afar, we see an angel form and his voice sounds like the music of heaven. But when he comes near, and we give him our hand, we feel the clutch of the demon and we hear a voice that mocks at our misery. The rewards of worldly ambition and the indulgences of worldly pleasure seem so precious and beautiful when seen afar that we cannot wait to make them our own. But when they come near and we grasp at the tempting prize, we fill our hand with the mist, and we draw it back to our bosom wet with the chill of death. When the gilded shadow which dazzled our vision and awakened our hope, has

come near and proved to be only "such stuff as dreams are made of," then it passes away, and often in the distance it seems again as brilliant and alluring as before. If we would not spend our life in the chase of phantoms that "lead to bewilder and dazzle to blind," we must turn our yearning hearts to Him who is the same yesterday, to-day and for ever. We must climb so high upon the mount of faith that the clouds of doubt and fear will never darken our minds or deceive our hearts.

The righteousness of God is like the great mountains in supplying sources of life, health and subsistence to dependent millions. The range of mountains which covers vast portions of a continent with barren rocks and eternal snows is a storehouse of riches and fertility for all the plains. It is the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills that fill the treasuries of nations, and send the blessing of health into the habitations of millions. Level the Andes with the basin of the Amazon, and South America would become a desert. Erase the Alps from the map of Europe, and the banks of the Rhone and the Po would be smitten with worse desolation than plague or war. The cold and barren mountains alone save the Valley of the Mississippi from becoming a Sahara. If the high lands of Ethiopia should sink to the level of the plain, it would dry up the fountains of the Nile, and inflict worse plagues upon Egypt than the ten sent upon Pharaoh.

The mountains supply sources for the mighty river,

which lays a highway for nations, and lends fertility to the soil and beauty to the landscape wherever it flows. The mountains condense clouds from the humid air, and pour them down in refreshing rain upon the parched fields and the pastured hills. The cold mountains produce varying currents in the atmosphere, and send down from their snowy heights bracing winds to sweep away the malaria of the marsh and the infection of the crowded city. The mountains yield up from their deep treasuries precious gems that flame in the coronet of kings, and gold that commands the fabrics of every art and the productions of every clime. The mountains catch the first rays of the sun in his rising, and they gladden in his parting. They smoke with clouds of incense, and they flame with perpetual altar-fires, as if appointed to offer the morning and evening sacrifices of a grateful world to the King of heaven. The mountains, cold and barren themselves, and looking down in serene and awful majesty upon the subject earth, supply life and warmth to all that live.

So the great righteousness of God may seem cold and stern, forbidding the pleasures and frowning upon the simplest joys of life. There are many who see in a just God nothing but a cold and impassive Intelligence — a supreme and unsympathizing Sovereign, whose arbitrary will is his only reason, and whose infinite power is his only title to universal dominion. And yet the Divine righteousness is the unfailing fountain from which all holy beings derive their life, their

peace and their joy. The just God is the Saviour. The high and lofty One dwells with the lowly. The eyes that cannot look upon sin are full of tenderness and pity for the sinner. There would be nothing in the universe worth living for if we could not believe in the infinite and everlasting rectitude of Him who holds in his hand the life of every living thing and the soul of all mankind. The righteousness of God alone can sweep through the dark places of his dominion, which have been infected by the foul malaria of sin, and purge away the ravaging plague with its cleansing fires. The great righteousness of God alone can save his boundless kingdom from the triumphant reign of infinite wrong and endless despair. God's great righteousness alone can clothe the redeemed soul in garments of immortal beauty. It can raise up the penitent and lowly children of men to hold equal rank with the thrones and powers of heaven.

The mountains suggest with terrible significance the greatness of the power which the Supreme Sovereign can bring into exercise for the maintenance of his authority in the world. The mountains are only the frozen waves of a world of fire. They were heaved up of old by some stormy convulsion, which ceased at the Omnific word and left its stiffened billows still on high. Those subterranean fires are still burning. Not all the waters of the great ocean can put them out. The earthquake heaves and rocks the seated hills and the solid ground of a whole continent to remind us that we

are walking every day upon the cracking crust of a sea of fire—we are sleeping every night upon the thin surface of the burning deep. The volcano shoots its lurid flame into the heavens to tell us that the mighty furnace beneath is always kindled and waiting for the Omnific word to wrap the whole earth in devouring fire. And shall we not stand in awe of that great Sovereign whose breath in a moment can blow the solid earth into billows and whirlwinds of fire beneath our feet?

And it is to the shelter of this great power that the weak and the unworthy are invited to flee for protection. In this respect also the great mountains are fit representatives of the great righteousness of God. When the avenging fires were ready to overwhelm the Cities of the Plain, angel messengers warned the one righteous family to escape to the mountains. In all time the hills and the high places of the earth have been the refuge of the persecuted and the sanctuary of the oppressed. For a thousand years the unconquered Waldenses defied the armies of kings and emperors with their songs of thanksgiving to the Maker of the mountains amid the solitudes of the Alps. They sang upon their rocky heights in sight of their enemies, and all the legions of Rome had not the power to silence their hymns of lofty cheer:

"For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!
Thou hast made thy children mighty
By the touch of the mountain sod.

Thou hast fixed our ark of refuge,
Where the spoiler's foot ne'er trod;
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!

"The banner of the chieftain
Far, far below us waves;
The war-horse of the spearman
Cannot reach our lofty caves;
Thy dark clouds wrap the threshold
Of freedom's last abode;
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!

"For the dark, resounding heavens,
Where thy still small voice is heard;
For the strong pines of the forests,
That by thy breath are stirred;
For the storms on whose free pinions
Thy Spirit walks abroad;
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!

"For the shadow of thy presence
Round our camp of rock outspread;
For the stern defiles of battle,
Bearing record of our dead;
For the snows and for the torrents,
For the free heart's burial-sod;
For the strength of the hills we bless thee,
Our God, our fathers' God!"

All the deep places of the earth and the fastnesses of the mountains are in God's hand, and the strength of the hills is his also. He is himself the Rock of Ages—a refuge from every peril, a hiding-place from every storm. The infinite and awful righteousness

which he makes the habitation of his throne is pledged by immutable covenant to receive all who seek his aid. This is the great mystery and glory of divine revelation; that sinners find their sure defence in the unchanging righteousness of Him against whom they have committed all their sin. It will be the great wonder in heaven that millions are there who were once enemies of God, and He that sitteth upon the throne calls them brethren. And the desires of the Infinite Love will be satisfied only when the mountains bring peace to all souls, and the hills rejoice at the universal reign of righteousness.

Trees.

Out of the ground made the Lord God to grow every tree that is pleasant to the sight and good for food.—GEN. ii. 9.

IV.

TREES.

THE earliest and the only record of the divine work in creation tells us how largely the idea of beauty and pleasantness entered into the plan of the Lord God in making the world. The first act of the word of power that went forth upon the face of the formless deep was to bring order out of confusion and light out of darkness. The Almighty would finish his perfect work by giving his earthly children an instinctive love for the beautiful, a capacity and a longing for the refinements of taste and feeling. In anticipation of that want he fitted and furnished their home with forms and hues that would be pleasant to the eye. He set the winds and the waves, the birds and the brooks, the forest and the fields to bring forth sounds that would be harmonious to the ear.

When God made the trees grow out of the ground, it was as much his design to give them graceful forms to please the taste for the beautiful as it was to load them with fruit which should be good for food to the hungry. The first man was placed in Paradise not simply to eat of the fruit of the trees and rest idly beneath their

shade. He was to dress the garden and keep it beautiful. He was to study the first perfect plan, and thus both guide and gratify his own taste by familiarity with the perfection of beauty. The branching trees and trailing vines, the brilliant flowers and singing birds, the graceful hills and winding streams, were all put under his care, to be kept in such order that his garden-home might be according to the promise in the name Eden—a garden of delight.

Paradise itself signifies a park of trees, wild and cultured, stately and graceful, to please the eye with their beauty and to support life with their fruit. The inspired description of Paradise recurs again and again to the trees of the garden, as if they gave the chief character and the peculiar charm to man's first and sinless home on the earth. The groves of Eden were the first temple, in which the new-created pair offered a pure and acceptable worship to Him at whose word the trees grew from the sacred ground. They heard the voice of the Lord God mingling with the murmur of the foliage when the wind of the morning waved the branches, and the tree-tops bowed before the presence of their Maker. To them the trembling of the leaves was the sign that they were trodden by the invisible steps of heavenly messengers coming to talk with them in the shady bowers of their new domain, and to teach them the language of another world. And when they heard their names called in the cool of the day, it seemed to them that the divine voice had spoken from

the sanctuary of the green boughs and the pleasant trees that adorned their garden-home.

When the sorrowing exiles were driven forth from Eden, and the flaming sword forbid all return, it was natural that they should remember with peculiar interest the pleasant trees under whose shadow they had worshiped in their sinless state. The murmur of the foliage in Paradise must have sounded on in the memory of the fugitives like the dying strains of distant music—like the song of angels singing as they soar and going out among the stars. In the hush of noontide and in the silence of night they must have listened with tearful eyes and throbbing hearts for the murmur among the leaves that once told them of the step of angels and prepared them to hear the voice of the Lord God.

In all their subsequent wanderings it was natural that the exiles from Eden should cherish a peculiar reverence for goodly trees and green groves. Wherever they went, the sight of waving woods and shady walks and clustered trees would remind them of the lost Paradise. When the evening wind breathed upon the leafy branches, and a gentle tremor ran through the green foliage, they would listen with breathless awe for the divine voice which they once heard walking among the trees of the garden. They transmitted the same feeling to their descendants of many generations. The time has not yet wholly past when devout men go out into the solemn woods and bow down beneath the

shade of ancient trees to hear the voice of God. It was the abuse of a tender and sacred tradition that led the idolaters of old to build their altars and set up their images in the groves and under every green tree. The branching oak and the bending willow, the fragrant cedar and the feathery palm, were sacred to the patriarchs in the days of their wanderings. And they are as pure to-day as when they graced the walks and crowned the hills of Paradise. They still lift up living altars of green verdure to heaven. They still offer the sacred retreat and solemn shade where men may meet with angels. They still present, morning, evening and at noon of day, the acceptable incense of balsams and sweet odors to Him before whom the mountains and the hills break forth into singing and all the trees of the field clap their hands.

We may thus reasonably account for the fact that the human family, for many ages after the exile from the wooded garden of Paradise, looked upon ancient and graceful trees with feelings of reverence and strong affection. And this sentiment seems to have been encouraged in some degree by the Lord God, whose voice was heard among the trees of Paradise. No one can read the sacred record attentively without associating ancient and venerable trees with feelings of worship, and with some of God's most wonderful and gracious visitations to man.

The more we study the forms, the habits and the uses of trees, the more we shall see the goodness of the

Lord God who continues to make them grow out of the ground which man has made accursed by his sin. Trees seem almost human in sociability and in isolation. They grow flexible and considerate of each other when crowded into narrow spaces. They become hard and rigid when standing alone. Their strength is developed when they have to force their roots down among rocks and lift up their unsupported arms in the face of the furious wind and the pitiless storm. When they grow in companies, they stretch out their hands toward each other as if in tenderness and salutation. They yield a space in the open air for their fellows to lift themselves up to the light. They crowd along the banks of the silvery brooks, and their fairest and most flexible branches are always most eager to overhang the bright waters, as if to see their graceful forms and flowing tresses reflected in the shining mirror below.

They climb over the ridges of hills in glittering troops to catch the first light of the morning and to wave their green banners in the glow of the setting day. They go down into the dark glens and valleys to hide the desolation of the rocks, and to take up the merry music of the waterfall upon their trembling leaves and swaying branches. They cover the plains with their plumed and bannered hosts. They climb the mountain-sides with their scaling legions. They woo the clouds from afar, and make the pitying heavens dissolve in rain when the parched earth is panting

with thirst and the harvest is dying for water. They mourn for the flowers and the birds and all the bright children of the sun when the summer is past, and their leafless branches thrill like ten thousand harp-strings in sounding the dirge of the dying year.

Mighty rivers have their fountains in the leaves of the forest. The clouds gather and the rains of heaven come down in answer to the supplication of the green woods. The fertile plain mourns and the springs in the valleys are dried up, and the flocks wander in vain for pasturage, when fire breaks out in the forests and the cruel axe hews down the ancient trees. The Holy Land has become sterile and desolate because the cedars are gone from Lebanon; the oaks have left the hills of Ephraim and Judah; the palms which gave the name to Bethany and Jericho no longer shade the weary pilgrim. The memorable trees and mighty forests which stand forth as living landmarks in the history of the patriarchs and the poetry of the Psalms have all passed away.

It is not without reason that ancient records give such sacred prominence to trees. There is something almost human and companionable in a tree. It gathers a thousand pleasing and tender associations around the calm retreat of home. It cheers the solitary traveler in the strange land. It keeps silent watch by the hallowed grave of the beloved dead with the solemn stars by night. The tree has a life, and a growth, and decay as we have. It rejoices in the light, it shivers

in the cold, it moans in the storm. Many of us can count some venerable or beautiful tree among the remembered companions of childhood and the still cherished friends of mature years. Many a tree has a history bound up with the most influential experience of individuals and families. Many a man's heart throbs with unusual emotion when he comes back after long absence to the home of his fathers, and sits again beneath the shade of the same old tree which extended its sheltering arms over him in childhood.

There is many a tree whose story must be told in the history of the most stirring scenes of national life. The old elm on Boston Common is more sacred and historic than the battle monument which human hands have reared high on the neighboring hill. The ancient tree in Cambridge, under which Washington drew his sword for the first time at the head of the Continental army, carries us back by a continuous life to the time when the earth shook and the heavens thundered with the throes of a new birth, and the giant child of the West was born into the family of nations. In the public square of a Swiss town, fenced with iron and buttressed with stone, stands the trunk of an ancient lime tree. Ask the passing citizen what means the care with which the tree is kept, he will tell you that it is the nation's monument. The life of that tree runs back four hundred years, to the day when the liberties of the land were staked on the field of Morat. When the invading legions of France

were broken and scattered by the impetuous charge of the brave mountaineers, a young villager ran bleeding all the way from the bloody field to tell the news. When he reached the town, he had only breath to shout the one word, "*Victory*" and fell dead upon the spot where the tree now stands. The living lime branch which the messenger had used for a staff in climbing the hill and fording the stream, and which he still held in his lifeless hand stained with his own blood, was planted on the spot, and it grew into a tree whose murmuring leaves in summer and whose naked branches in winter have been singing *victory* for four hundred years. As I gazed on that venerable monument of the past, I felt as if a living hand had reached down to me from far distant ages, and its warm grasp made me kin with those who fought and fell at Morat for liberties which many lands have not yet won.

At the Elster gate of Wittenberg is a green oak, growing upon the site of a more ancient tree, beneath whose spreading branches Luther burnt the Papal Bull and defied all the spiritual thunders of the Romish power. With reverent hand I plucked a leaf from that younger tree, and sent it all the way across the ocean to this Western world, in the full belief that it would be fondly cherished in the land where Truth speaks with a monarch's voice and Liberty walks with an unfettered step. A living tree is the fittest monument of any victory gained in behalf of

that liberty wherewith the word of life is destined to make all men free.

It is therefore with a wise reference to the conditions of human life, and the laws of association in the human mind, that the Bible has drawn some of the most instructive lessons of spiritual truth from the trees of the forest. A few instances will suffice to show the usage of the sacred writers in this respect.

When Abraham was called to leave kindred and country, and he was assured that Palestine should be given to him and his posterity for a possession, he went out of Haran with all his household, and the first place where he rested and worshiped Jehovah in his promised inheritance was under a terebinth tree in Moreh, near the spot where Jesus afterward rested by the well of Sychar. From thence he passed on southward until he came and dwelt in a grove of oaks that grew on the slope of a hill, with the cave of Machpelah on the opposite side of the valley, and the vineyards and green pastures of Hebron near at hand.

While the whole land was filled with idolatry, and human sacrifices were offered upon the neighboring heights, the living grove became a sanctuary unto Abraham. Under the shadow of oaks he built an altar and called on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. Beneath the spreading branches of the same trees the father of the faithful saw angels approaching his tent-door in the broad light of day. At his pressing and courteous invitation they rested in the shade upon the

green grass, as if weary with traveling. They partook of the hospitality which Abraham set forth with patriarchal simplicity in the open air under the oak. While he stood as a servant to wait upon the strangers, not as yet knowing the divine dignity of his guests, he received a renewal of the promise that in his posterity should all the nations of the earth be blessed.

It was under the shadow of the same oaks that Abraham made intercession for the doomed Cities of the Plain. In so doing he gave an example of reverent, familiar and persevering prayer which will afford encouragement and instruction to God's people to the end of time. That most extraordinary interview between man and the infinite Jehovah took place in no temple made with hands, in no shrine of secret devotion, in connection with no costly ceremonial of worship. It was in the open light of day, upon the green grass, under the spreading branches of the green trees. The man who met his Maker face to face in familiar yet humble intercession was resting from his ordinary occupation at noontide when the divine Guest appeared at his tent-door. There did Abraham speak with God as man speaks with his friend.

And in all time and in all the earth it is given to the pure in heart, in like manner, to speak with God. In the glare of noon and the hush of night, on the crowded street and in the silent chamber, amid the wilds of the desert and on the waste of the ocean, the God of Abraham is near to all that seek his presence—his ear is

open to all who call upon him. The divine Guest no longer appears with the face and form of man. But his presence is not the less real, and his voice is ever speaking in gentle accents to the humble soul. To each one of us the word of the Lord comes as clearly as it came to the father of the faithful, saying: "Walk before me, and be thou perfect and I will bless thee, and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing to many."

When Abraham changed his residence, and journeyed southward and westward to Beersheba, his first care was to plant a grove of sacred oaks on the borders of the desert, and to consecrate his new home by calling on the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. Having talked with God under the oaks on the hillside of Mamre, he desired the same green sanctuary to mark the spot where he set up his tent and gathered his herds and household around him in the pastures of the south.

In that far distant age, and in the land which the heathens still possessed as their own, Abraham set an example worthy of all imitation in every land to the latest times. From him may all the families of the earth learn to set up the altar of prayer in every place of abode, and to build the sanctuary for the true God wherever there are hands to work or hearts to worship. The forest and the field, the desert and the wilderness, are holy to him who consecrates everything by prayer. And it is not fitting for us to be found in any place of

toil, of recreation or of repose where we cannot readily, at any hour of the day or of the night, call upon the name of the Lord, the everlasting God. The house which cannot be dedicated by prayer had better not be built. The occupation which cannot be pursued in humble reliance upon the Divine blessing had better be given up. The amusement which unfits the mind for worship is not such as the friends of God should choose.

When Moses was commissioned to undertake the great deliverance of Israel out of Egypt, the Divine voice addressed him from the green branches of a tree, which stood unconsumed in the midst of brilliant and flaming fire. The great I AM, who had talked with Abraham under the oaks of Mamre four hundred years before, called to Moses from the burning bush in the wilderness of Sinai. After that first awful and impressive interview, it was hardly possible that the shepherd of Horeb could pass the solitary palm or the wild thorns and acacias of the desert without feeling that the Divine voice might still linger in the green branches and address him from the trembling foliage.

To us in our time God speaks by his presence and power from the green branches of every tree that shades the city walks, from every grove and forest that clothes the hills and plains of the far-extended country. It is not necessary to go to the deserts of Arabia or to the holy places of Palestine to find evidences that God walks with man in the forest shade

as well as in the hallowed sanctuary. Through all the winter months our trees are bare skeletons—monuments of desolation and death—over which the winds moan in melancholy dirges day and night. The spring comes, and all is changed. You go out at noonday, when the sun is shining, and take your stand beneath the broad-spreading branches of an ancient elm or the thicker foliage of the silvery maple. Look up and you will see a wilderness of life and beauty, dazzling and infinite, with bright sunbeams burning in the midst of the lustrous leaves, and ever-shifting shadows giving splendor and mystery to the flickering and tremulous light. Do not be afraid to believe that God brings forth that new creation of life and beauty with every returning spring—that the living trees may speak to you of his goodness as clearly as he spoke by the living voice to Moses from the burning bush of Sinai.

We have only to receive the lessons of God's word and providence with teachable and loving hearts, and we shall gain light and instruction from the trees, the flowers and the grass, as truly as the first pair heard the voice of the Lord God among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day. The Psalmist calls upon the trees to praise the Lord. The prophet declares that the trees shall clap their hands for joy in that day when the word of the Lord has accomplished its work of instruction and salvation among men. And surely we need not be afraid of giving too much life

and meaning to the expression of God's power and goodness in clothing the trees with the foliage of spring, the flowers of summer and the fruits of autumn.

When Israel marched out of Egypt they made their first encampment under the shelter of green boughs at Succoth. And for more than fifteen hundred years the Hebrew nation, by Divine command, turned out of their houses once a year and dwelt a whole week in tabernacles of green boughs, to commemorate the night when their ancestors, under the leadership of Moses, made their first encampment under the palm branches of Succoth. The fugitives had just begun the long march of forty years. Their memories still lingered around the little cottages and humble homes left vacant in the land of bondage. Even liberty must have lost some of its charms to their minds as they lay down shivering upon the bare earth and covered themselves with green boughs for the night. And God designed that their posterity should preserve a memorial of those sheltering palms of Succoth by keeping the great national feast of the tabernacles throughout all their generations.

When they had passed the Red Sea and journeyed three days into the wilderness, they were ready to die of thirst, and the only springs that they found were bitter. Then the Lord showed Moses a tree, which, when it was cast into the fountain, made the waters sweet. At the third station in the great march they

rested beneath the seventy palms and beside the twelve fountains of Elim. When the forty years of wandering in the wilderness were ended, the weary tribes entered upon their promised inheritance at the City of Palms. When the people were settled in the land the sanctuary of the Lord was set up, and the ark, with the stone tables of Sinai and the rod of Aaron and the book of the law, rested under a great oak in Shechem.

When the angel of the Lord appeared for the deliverance of Israel in the time of the Judges, he was found seated under an oak in Ophrah. When King David had taken possession of Mount Zion, and he was preparing to bring the ark of the Lord to the place of its final rest, the Philistines came up in great hosts from the seaside to overrun and destroy his kingdom. He inquired of the Lord what he should do, and he was told that he should lead out his little army into a grove of mulberry trees on the plain of Rephaim to the south of Jerusalem; and when he should hear the sound of a marching host in the tops of the trees, then he should move upon his enemies, and the Lord would go before him in the swaying of the branches. He did so when he heard the sound in the trees, and the Philistines were scattered before him.

And so all the way through the Old Testament Scriptures we find so many extraordinary interpositions of God's providence connected with trees as to give them something like a sacred character. And this feeling is greatly confirmed and intensified in our

minds when we come to the Gospels, and find the incarnate Son of God, in the hour of his great and mysterious agony, going out from Jerusalem and bowing down to pray beneath the silent and pitying olive trees of Gethsemane.

The figurative use of trees in the Bible is even more rich and various than the memorials treasured up in sacred history. In the Psalms and Prophets the trees are addressed as if a living soul dwelt among the branches. They are called upon to sing, to clap their hands, to rejoice before the Lord when he comes to establish the reign of righteousness and truth in the earth. When Jesus rode into Jerusalem amid the acclamations of the multitude, he said that the stones in the streets would cry out if the children were compelled to hold their peace. And we may well imagine that the forests and the hills shall break forth into singing when the long reign of iniquity and error shall cease, and the Sun of Righteousness shines in cloudless splendor upon all the habitations of man.

It is said that all who receive the glad tidings of salvation shall become trees of righteousness, the Lord's planting, bringing forth fruit unto eternal life. The righteous man shall flourish like the palm tree; he shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. He shall be like the tree planted by the rivers of waters, blooming through all the year. When all the toil and conflict of earth and time are past, the lost blessedness of Eden shall be more than regained by those who shall

have right to the tree of life which is in the midst of the Paradise of God.

Thus, at whatever point we take up the thread of divine truth and trace it home to its origin, we are brought at last to the land of rest, to the throne of God and the Lamb. All the revelations of the divine wisdom and power in creation are designed to draw us personally and trustingly to the infinite Source of truth and love. If our hearts were fully open to the teachings of God's works, every green leaf would show us enough of him to make us wonder and adore Every lofty tree would lift up our hearts in gratitude and love. Every wild forest, swayed by the wind, would seem like a living orchestra of millions of harp-strings swept by angel fingers to the Creator's praise.

And we must not say that divine truth is of so spiritual a character that we cannot grasp its meaning or feel its reality. It is constantly set before us in earthly forms and semblances on purpose that it may strike our perceptions and stir our hearts. The word of inspiration describes heaven itself in such terms as we should use in speaking of a material and an earthly Paradise. It has a house with mansions enough to receive all that come. It has living fountains that send up silvery showers through the quiet light. It has a river clear as crystal, with evergreen trees growing upon either bank. The branches bend with fruit through all the year, and the living foliage diffuses life and blessing through the genial air. It has a city

with walls of precious stones and streets of shining gold. In the streets and on the banks of the river, and through all the groves of the heavenly paradise, are the blessed walking in multitudes and nations and numbers without number. They talk and they sing; they wear white robes and they carry palms in their hands; they play on harps and they worship; they repose, and they make the whole region resound with exultant and joyous life.

This is the way that the Bible speaks of heaven. And this is the description of a place which our human hearts would long to see and to enjoy as a bright and blessed home. Our earthly attachments, our daily experiences, our familiar associations here may all fit us to rest and rejoice there. The beautiful rainbow and the balancing clouds, the waving woods and the solitary trees, the grassy banks and the golden fruits, the feathery palms and the precious stones, the dazzling noon and the starry night, the silvery fountains and the quiet homes of earth, are all representations of a higher, purer, more glorious reality in the blessed world beyond the river of death. The study of the wisdom displayed in God's works here will prepare us to enjoy the glory of God's presence there. What we see now is only the shadow of better things to come. The Son of God took on himself our suffering body, and passed into the highest heaven in our human nature, that he might teach us the reality and the attractions of the spiritual world. Following his example, we

shall use all these earthly and temporal things as helps and incentives to the attainment of the unseen and eternal.

Among all the living things of earth the trees afford us the highest representation of the immortal life to come. In the trees alone can we find an individual life beginning beyond the earliest records of history, and outlasting the life of cities and empires that have proudly called themselves "eternal." Far back in the ages of the past a wind-wafted seed fell into the fertile soil of a mountain valley in California. It was among the smallest of seeds. It was cased in a hard and dry husk, and it soon mingled with the dust. But in dying it gave life to a tender, thread-like stalk that rose slowly and tremblingly to the light and air.

At that time God was calling Abraham to leave the home of his fathers and become a wanderer in the land of Canaan. A hundred years passed on and Abraham died, and that delicate thread of green had become a great tree. Three hundred years more pass, and the descendants of Abraham march out of Egypt an emancipated people, and that mighty tree is still lifting its giant arms to the sky. Five hundred years more come and go, and Solomon is upon the throne of Israel, and the history of Greece and Rome has not yet begun, but that tree is still growing. A thousand years more are added to the world's life, and thirty generations of men have all been carried away by death, and Christ rises from the tomb in the garden of Joseph, and that

tree still lives. And now eighteen hundred years more of struggle and conflict and change have passed over the earth. The New World has been discovered and the Old World has been made new, and still that mighty tree, which was alive and no bigger than a blade of grass springing from a decayed seed in Abraham's day, is still lifting its towering column of green verdure to the skies. It is a hundred feet higher than the highest structure reared by human hands in America. A great army could encamp within the reach of its shadow. That tree has been the contemporary of Abraham and Moses and David, of Cæsar and Mohammed and Napoleon. It has flourished in perennial beauty while a hundred and twenty generations of men have appeared on the earth and passed away. And yet it is green and full of life to-day. And it all sprang from the decay of the one small seed that was buried in the ground four thousand years ago.

And so this body of ours, which is the husk of the soul, shall be buried in the earth. It shall moulder and mingle with the dust from which it sprang. But from its ashes there shall come forth the germ of a new and an immortal life, which shall be clothed in a spiritual and deathless body. And the living soul, invested with its new and ethereal form, shall go on increasing in greatness and beauty and power until it surpasses the highest reach of this earthly life as much as the mighty Californian pine surpasses the seed which died in giving it birth.

Those that sleep in Christ shall rise from the dead to share his life, and their blessed existence in the future shall be measured only by the eternal years of God. New faculties shall shoot forth from the growth of the immortal mind as new branches are sent out from the trunk of the growing tree. The soul, in its new life, shall not be fettered and paralyzed by the want of suitable organs and sensibilities through which to act. The mind of the man who is blind from birth is not blind. Let the defect in the bodily eye be repaired, and the mind will flash into a new world of thought, experience and knowledge. The faculty of vision lay hidden in the mind and only wanted organs through which to use its power. So the resurrection body has only to supply the immortal mind with a better organization, and it will multiply the powers and joys of existence manifold and for ever.

To this great life in the endless future we shall all be raised up, if we know Christ and the power of his resurrection. This most Christian view of life alone can show us what is best worth living for. We can afford to make sacrifices and to suffer the loss of all things earthly to attain such a mighty and glorious existence in the future. We may well rejoice to declare our love and gratitude to that one infinite Friend who died to open for us such a career of glory and joy through the resurrection from the dead. Christ, by his resurrection, has brought life and immortality to light. God forbid that we, by worldliness and unbe-

lief, should revive the destroyer's power and make ourselves subjects of his cruel dominion for ever. With unfaltering hope let us ever look forward to that glorious day when we shall be clothed with the robes of immortality; our faces shall shine like the lightning, and we shall range with tireless pinions and ceaseless joy through all the beauties and glories of the kingdom of God.

The Grass of the Field.

If God so clothe the grass of the field, which to-day is, and to-morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?—MATT. vi. 30.

V.

THE GRASS OF THE FIELD.

IN the memorable words of our Lord, the grass of the field includes every kind of herbage which lives and dies in the passing year. In a still wider sense the expression is sometimes taken for the foliage and the blossom of all the green things of the earth; every living leaf that the spring brings forth in its beauty; every tender stalk that the summer dries up in its drought; everything that withers in the hot wind; everything that dies in the chilling frost. The Divine Teacher draws our attention to the robe of surpassing and perishable beauty with which the spring adorns the earth every year. He would rebuke and dismiss all our fears and anxieties by telling us that the Father, who pours out such a profusion of splendor upon the frailest things of earth, will not forget to provide for his own children.

We have indeed much to learn from the grass of the field. It is the child of the sun, and it bears witness to the Divine goodness in all climes wherever the light of the sun falls. The Psalmist tells us that the measuring line of the sun's light has gone out through all

the earth and its word of quickening power to the end of the world. And everywhere the smiling grass responds to the shining beam—in the valleys, on the hills and far up the mountain's side. Let the grass include all the green things of the earth—the hardy snow-plant that blooms amid arctic snows, the delicate moss that finds a foothold on the face of the rock, the luxuriant grain that waves in billows like the sea, and the foliage of the forest that comes and goes with the changing year—and then we may truly say, as the Psalmist says of the heavens, there is no speech nor language where its voice is not heard. To every nation and tribe on the face of the earth the grass declares the goodness of God as the heavens declare his glory. We can see the handiwork of the great Creator in the smallest leaf, in the frailest flower, as well as in the firmament of stars and the infinite host of heaven.

When God said in the beginning, "Let the earth bring forth grass," the quickening power of the creative word was felt in every clime and on every island of the sea. This frailest form of vegetation, to which Christ appeals as a living witness of God's providential care, occupies the widest range of anything that grows on the face of the earth, and it is brought forth in the greatest abundance. It adapts itself to the extremes of temperature in every zone, and it draws the means of support from every soil. It goes beyond the most adventurous explorer among the icy rigors of the north. It creeps higher on the mountain side than

the foot of man has ever climbed. No island of the sea has been discovered so far remote from land as not to have been sought out and planted by the springing grass. Let subterranean fires push up a hot and sulphurous crater of molten stone and ashes in mid-ocean, and the grass will soon begin to creep up out of the waves and clothe the unsightly mass with its glorious robe of living green. You may cover any spot of earth ever so deep with burnt cinders and barren sand, on purpose to make it a perpetual desolation, and in the process of years the pitying grass will come and hide the hideous deformity from the light of the sun.

We try in vain to expel the gentle intruder from the paved streets and crowded walks of the great city. It steals into the dark alleys with a cheery smile, to tell the poor and afflicted that God has not forgotten them. It comes up, peeping timidly over the edge of the curbstone, where silken robes and shining equipages go flashing by, to show the rich in their pride and the youthful in their beauty that God arrays the frailest things of earth with a glory surpassing their own. It creeps out of some narrow chink beneath columned roofs and beside marble halls, "where merchants most do congregate" and misers make their millions. And it tells the anxious seekers after gain that God's kingdom is to be sought first. Our heavenly Father knoweth that we have need of all these earthly things. And he has promised to give them in such measure as is best to all who seek his kingdom first.

If we listen devoutly to the teachings of the grass that blooms and dies beneath our feet, we shall learn lessons that will lift our hearts to the heavens above and the life eternal.

This gentle missionary, which Christ sets forth to speak for him to our distrustful hearts, goes everywhere, preaching its silent sermon upon the good providence of God, and telling us to trust as well as to toil, to submit while we suffer. If you are inclined to despondency, and the burden of life seems heavier than you can bear, hang a broken vase in your window where the light falls; fill it with a few ounces of earth; let it drink water of the rain of heaven or from your own hand; and whether you plant seed in the soil or not, something will grow from the moist earth. Some small, rounded leaf, some thread-like blade of grass, will rise up in that hanging pulpit to preach to you all day long a silent sermon upon trust in Divine Providence, cheerful and happy acquiescence in the Divine will.

If you have a sick friend, and you would bring a beam of heavenly light into his dark chamber to cheer his heart in the sad hours of suffering, carry him the simplest flower from the garden or the field, place it by his bedside, where he can look up from his weary pillow and behold its beauty and breathe its perfume, and then say to him, Your heavenly Father sends you this gentle token of his unfailing love. See with what glory he clothes the messenger, and be not afraid to

trust the mercy of the message. Shall that great Father who flings abroad his blessings with such profusion upon the flowers of the field, forget the child that bears his own image and shares his own immortality? Shall the great Builder adorn our earthly house with such beauty for our delight in the days of health and prosperity, and yet forsake us in the dark hours of affliction and pain?

I passed the open door of a workshop in the midst of the toiling and crowded city. The black smoke of furnaces rose from the tall chimney. There was a din of hammers and a clank of iron inside. Sooty faces and grimed hands were moving quickly to and fro. Great masses of iron, hammered, and rolled, and welded, and cast, and turned, were lying everywhere upon the ground. Broad-shouldered and stout-handed men were pounding and punishing the glowing metal with such fury that nothing could be heard but the blows of hammers and the ringing of iron.

And my first thought was this: How hard a lot it must be to pound one's life out in the sooty forge and the stifling furnace! But the next moment I saw that the hardy workers had provided themselves with silent preachers to charm away such impatient and murmuring thoughts. Before the window, where the light came in, was a flower-stand, and the frail children of the garden and the field were there, ranged rank above rank, to preach to those weary and hard-working men all day long. And then I thought that if

Jesus should come there to teach, amid the clang of hammers, and the groan of engines, and the smoke of furnaces, as he went down to the seaside to talk with the fishermen, he would point to the flowers and say to the men, See with what glory your heavenly Father clothes the frailest things of earth. And if God puts forth such wondrous power and wisdom in making things that die in a day, how much more will he care for you who have been made to live for ever! Work on, then, with brave hearts and strong hands, in your hard occupation, and make the toil of life a preparation for blessed and endless rest.

And so all round the world the flowers and the grass go preaching the great lesson of trust in God. The burning paths of the desert, the rocky cliffs of the snow-clad mountain, the unsounded depths of the sea, the wildest and most awful solitudes in nature, are strewn with forms of life and beauty. And everything that lives teaches the same great lesson of trust in God. Everywhere the devout and diligent explorer finds himself following the footsteps of divine power, tracing the lines of God's handiwork.

Every leaf that grows absorbs poison from the air, and at the same time gives back the support and the stimulus of life. The mightiest forces are held back from the work of destruction by the delicate fingers of the grass. It shoots its tender roots into the thin soil on the face of the Alpine mountain, and holds the avalanche from thundering down upon the sleeping

village and the silent plain below. It goes down to the seashore, and thrusts its living fingers deep into the dry sand, and there it stands through all the year, with its yellow hair waving in the wind, ever saying to the stormy deep, Hitherto shalt thou come, and no farther, and here shalt thy proud waves be stayed. And the mighty deep brings up its rolling billows in charge after charge against the barrier built by the feeble fingers of the grass, but the heavy battalions of the sea can never sweep it away. It goes out upon the broad prairie, and over rounded hills, and up the narrow valley, everywhere covering the earth with a green robe which is pleasant to look upon, and a protection to the earth against wind and sun. We cannot conceive a more naked and awful desolation than a landscape from which the covering of green grass has been taken away. If it were not for the protection which it affords, the surface of the ground would become like ashes from the furnace. The air would be darkened with powder and dust, and the suffocating sand-storm would pile its drifts on every fair field until the earth became a universal desert.

And it means much that the kind of vegetation which is most widely diffused and which grows in the greatest abundance should be chosen by Christ to teach us the grand lesson of trust in God—calm and constant reliance upon his providential care. Wherever there is earth and sunshine enough for a blade of grass to grow, there is a gentle preacher to take up the

word of Christ and say, Let not your hearts be troubled; your heavenly Father knoweth what things ye have need of. No grief or joy of yours can fail to touch your Father's heart.

The world is full of the anxious, the weary and the disappointed. Millions are running all over the earth, tugging along under the great burden of life, wrestling in mental conflict with imaginary monsters, striving to solve the awful mystery of the universe; and all to find rest for the soul—all to calm down the turbid elements of care and anxiety and passion in their hearts. They go too far and they work too hard. They suffer too much and they search too long. The frailest flower that blooms, the feeblest blade of grass that grows, unfolds the grand secret of happiness, directs the weary heart to the only source of rest. It is trust—calm, strong, unchanging trust in Him who clothes the lilies with glory, and gives the feeble grass strength to stay the avalanche on the mountain side and the stormy deep on the sandy shore.

The springing grass says to the weary, the disappointed, the unhappy, All your trouble comes from not trusting your best Friend. You are afraid to believe that the infinite God cares for you as a wise and affectionate father cares for his own child. You are afraid to trust the guidance of the Hand that holds the earth in its orbit and marshals the stars upon the fields of space. You are afraid to believe that Christ is speaking to you when he says, All needed earthly things

shall be given to those who seek the kingdom of God first. Let this silent page preach the sermon of the perishing grass to the weary eyes that fall upon it, to the troubled heart that beats beside the open book, to the careless who think not what they read, to the self-accusing and over-conscientious, who think so much of themselves that they think too little of Christ: to all let this silent page say as says the grass of the field, Trust and be strong; trust and be cheerful; trust and be in earnest; trust and wait. And let all trust be in Him who feeds the fowls of heaven and clothes the grass of the field.

Trust in money, and you will be poor, however much you own. Trust in God, and you will be rich and the heir of all things, though you had not where to lay your head. Trust in bodily health, and you will die, though you should have all the physicians and remedies in the world at your command. Trust in Christ—the Prince of Life—and you shall live and be happy, though the light of the sun should go out and the visible heavens should pass away. You may be proud, or indifferent, or skeptical, and say you see no meaning in the silent sermon which I say the grass is always preaching, but you will learn nothing better if you should study a thousand years. The little flower that looks up in your face with its smiling beauty for one day and then dies, will tell you more about the grand secret of human happiness than all the philosophers in the world. And if you ever find out that secret, you

will say it is *trust*—a calm, unwavering confidence that your heavenly Father is caring for you every moment, and that he is fully able to make the greatest trial the greatest blessing. And to learn this lesson you have only to consider with what glory God clothes the grass of the field, and how much more he must care for you than for things that bloom and die in a day.

The grass is also well fitted to teach us the most Christian and practical lesson of lowliness of mind. The Divine Teacher said, "Come and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly." The humble grass, which we tread beneath our feet, takes up the word of Jesus and says, "Learn of me, for I also am lowly." It is content to occupy the meanest place, and it is glad to grow in the poorest soil. The more we tread and crop it down, the more thickly it grows, and the more even and beautiful the carpet which it spreads beneath our feet. Mow it with the scythe and it will send up two stalks in place of one. Let it be trampled upon by grazing herds and crushed into the earth by laden wheels—let it lie all winter beneath the drifted snow—let it be cut down to the roots every week in summer, and it will be more compact and even and beautiful the more it is mown and trampled and rolled and shorn. It grows where nothing else can live. It comes forth again with the first shower, when it seems as if the hot summer had burnt out its life. It is the first green thing to welcome the spring and the last to wither in autumn. It carpets the lawn of the lordly mansion, and it sends a

smile of joyous sunlight into the open door of the humble cottage. It comes up laughingly to be sprinkled by the spray of the marble fountain, and it goes down to drink by the banks of the babbling brook. It welcomes the young and the gay to its smooth, enameled floor, and it slides a soft cushion beneath the trembling step of the aged and the feeble. It borders the lonely walks with banks of green, and it beautifies the grave with the hues of Paradise and the promise of resurrection. Everywhere the lowly grass offers its kindly ministrations to clothe everything with beauty, to make everybody happy.

And this is the form of vegetation which our Lord bids us consider, that we may learn the graces of a lowly and trustful life. The happiest are those who are willing to take the lowliest place. Self-conceit makes the misery of multitudes who might be cheerful and contented all the day long if they could learn to think less of themselves and more of making others happy. A man can afford to spend a long winter of years under the chilling snow of neglect and abuse if only he can come out bright and cheery and full of hope, like the grass in the spring. He can afford to be trodden under foot, and have the ploughers make long furrows upon his back, if affliction and trouble shall only give him simplicity of character and lowliness of heart.

In our ignorance and pride we are constantly forgetting that lowly things are mighty. God has given the

grass strength to curb the sea and chain the avalanche and set bounds to the desert. It is by gentleness that God makes his children great. The silent sunshine is mightier than the roaring storm. The Divine Conqueror, who has overcome the world, made himself the servant of every man's need. Pride is indeed strong, and it makes men do and suffer a thousand things which they would never attempt without it. But compared with humility pride is weak, and all the virtues and enterprises to which it gives rise end in disappointment and sorrow. Pride draws its strength from principles that are false and from sources that must fail. Pride exhausts itself in fighting against imaginary foes, and it rejoices over victories that confer no honor and promise no peace. Pride pulls down where it cannot build, spoils others without enriching itself, makes great sacrifices and gains nothing by suffering.

The grand discovery of Christian faith is to suffer and be strong, to submit and conquer, to be killed all the day long and yet live, to wear the cross and win the crown. Our true greatness begins not when we think more of ourselves, but when we think more of God, more of duty, more of making others happy. If I were called upon to go out into the streets and highways, to stand in the noisy manufactory or the crowded market-place, to enter the saloons of fashion and the mansions of wealth, and teach men, as I might find them in either place, the first lessons of human happiness in the fewest words, I would say, Love thyself

last, praise thyself least, fret thyself never. Try more to interest yourself in others than others in you. Envy nobody, despise nobody. Be willing to take the lowest place, and then strive to make it the highest by filling it well. When disposed to repine at your lot and to grow weary in well-doing, think of the manger in Bethlehem and who was laid there—think of the cross of Calvary and who was nailed thereon—think of the crown of heaven and who wears it. To be happy be humble. To learn how little reason you have to be proud, look down upon the lowly flower and the perishing grass, and see what beauty, what glory God confers upon things that you tread beneath your feet. Hear the voice which says, Learn of me, for I am lowly.

The grass is set forth many times in the sacred Scriptures to teach us the frailty of our mortal state. The wail of the prophetic voice that was heard of old, has been poured forth in every land—"All flesh is grass." The afflicted patriarch of Idumea was speaking for the whole race of man when he said, "He cometh forth like a flower and is cut down." Moses, the man of God, who wrote with the withered grass of the desert for his teacher, describes the human lot in every land: "He is like the grass that passeth away. In the morning it flourisheth and groweth up, in the evening it is cut down and withereth."

We stand beside the coffin which holds the stalwart frame of the strong man, and we take up the wail

which has come down from all past ages: "As the flower of the grass, he passeth away." A sad company gather around a white bier, and look down upon the pale flowers that garland the shroud of a little child, and they say with flowing tears and breaking hearts that both the child and the flowers bloomed only to fade. We go out into the silent city of the dead, and as we pace along its shaded paths, the pitying grass looks up from every mound to remind us how soon we ourselves shall lie as low as those that sleep beneath the sod. We look upon a delicate house-plant which was left in the open air over night, when the frost came too late in spring or too early in autumn. It was fair and full of life the day before. It is now shriveled and shorn of all its beauty, and it performs its last office for those who reared it by reminding us how soon we ourselves shall wither and be changed in the icy wind of death.

We stand upon some high place, as did the Persian king in ancient time, and look down upon the white tents and the waving banners of a mighty host encamped upon the plain below. They come forth at the call of the trumpet for a display of strength. The field is all alive with marching foot and flying horse. They form in orderly ranks, they lift their standards to the wind, they sound the charge, and sweep across the plain like swollen torrents rushing down the defiles of the mountain. The earth shakes with the thunder of their feet; their shout is like the roar of the deep in

storms. The mighty host seems like the embodiment of invincible power and invulnerable life.

And yet the grass of the field which they trample in their march is not more frail than that exultant mass of moving strength and martial pride. The crushed flower breathes forth its sad sermon upon the mortality of the living host that treads it down. The light in those eyes which are now flashing with fiery valor will soon go out. The glow of health in that stormy sea of living faces will be changed to the pallid hue of death. That mighty forest of uplifted and strong arms will become like the tendril of the flower when touched by frost. The busy brain will cease to thrill with thought, and the throbbing heart will rest. And in all those living, breathing, speaking forms there will be no more life than there is now in the grass that withered and the leaves that fell a year ago.

Such is the change that awaits all the living—such the shadow that will fall upon every path and dim the light of every eye. And where shall our immortal selves find a home when the wind of death has passed over this mortal frame and blown the life out of this perishable dust? In what province of God's great kingdom, in what state of bliss or woe, shall we make our habitation when the places which now know us on the earth shall know us no more for ever?

Child of mortality! behold yourself in the gentle flower that blooms and dies at your window. Bend your ear to the gentle whisper of the lowly grass. Be

ready for the coming of that frost in which the bud and flower of all your earthly hopes shall wither away. Be ready for the blast of that wind which shall blow you out of time into eternity. Let no earthly hope be so firmly rooted here that it will not live to be transplanted to the gardens of Paradise.

Light.

And God said, Let there be light: and there was light.—GEN. i. 3.

JOHN MARTIN JOHN SARTAIN

LET THERE BE LIGHT

VI.

LIGHT.

LIGHT is the crown and glory of the visible world. It is the source of life and energy to the body, and it is the symbol of truth to the soul. So far as we know it is the most beautiful and glorious of all the material works of God. The first-born of creation, it is the ethereal body and form of the Omnific word at which it flashed into being. It is the chosen medium through which the Divine energy continues to bestow and sustain life. Everything that lives and grows in the whole kingdom of Nature derives strength and stimulus from the light. When we would describe a scene of peculiar desolation and death, we say, There is no light there. Man makes his fellow-man the companion of misery by surrounding him with prison walls and pitiless doors, through which its cheering rays can never pass. When the Scriptures would shadow forth the horrors of a home where despair reigns supreme, they shut out the light and they bind its wretched inmates under chains of darkness for ever.

The enemy of all good, the father of all evil, is fitly

called the prince of darkness. The Divine Deliverer, who came down from the throne of heaven to save the lost and to drive the demons of darkness out of the world is, with equal fitness, called the Prince of light. He began his mighty work by opening the eyes of the blind, as he began the days of creation by sending forth the quickening word, "Let there be light." When he would gather his hosts from afar for the conquest of the world, he lifts up a banner of light. When he would equip his chosen legions for the mighty war, he clothes them in armor of light. When he would put into their hands a weapon of ethereal temper for defence in every peril and for the defeat of every foe, he gives them light for sword and shield and spear.

All our ideas of form and color and material beauty come to us through the agency of light. Of all the avenues through which knowledge finds entrance to the soul, the sense which responds to the touch of light is the most affluent and gorgeous in its ministrations. The pupil of the eye is the portal through which light brings in all the riches and glories of the earth and heavens to adorn the inner chamber of the soul The mind sits enthroned as a sovereign in its secret place, and this swift-winged messenger comes flying with intelligence from every point in the whole landscape and from the far-distant orbs of heaven. The mind has only to lift the curtain of the eye and millions of bright heralds will rush in to describe the

form and hue and order of everything in the world of vision.

I climb to the topmost pinnacle of the great cathedral at Milan and survey the teeming valley of the Po, with its vast extent of cultured trees and vines in lengthened rows and harvest-fields between. I take in at one glance the whole range of the Alps—one hundred and fifty miles east and west—blue with the glimmering haze of the dreamy air and white with shining snows. I gaze on the evening clouds swimming in a sea of fire around the setting sun. I wait for the stars to hang out their golden lamps in the infinite dome of heaven. And all the while the light has been sending swift heralds, from near and far, to tell me the form and hue and distance of everything within the range of vision. Some of the messengers have brought their tidings in an instant, and some have been on the way a million years to tell me where of old the breath of God blew a million suns into flame and sent them forth to sing and to shine among the rival spheres of heaven. And to me, as I stand and gaze from the giddy height, it is as if all this vast and varied scene were the creation of the light. Take from me the faculty of vision, and in place of all that wondrous world of beauty a blank and pitiless wall of darkness shuts me in on every side.

The mightiest and the most marvelous changes that ever take place in the visible world are due to the swift and silent agency of light. When the day breaks in

the east and the shadows of night melt into morn, it seems as if God had said again, as in the first creation, "Let there be light." There is no sound of gathering hosts, no sign of kindling flames, no shaking of the hills to herald the coming change. And yet, if we had passed from darkness to day, from midnight to morning, but once in our lives, we should witness the change with more wonder and we should describe it with more joy than we feel in reading Moses' account of the first creation.

The gloom and the horror of the night vanish. The world, which was silent and formless like chaos in the darkness, rises to view with clear and orderly proportions. The hills resume their wonted range. The valleys unroll the endless panorama of forest and field. The rivers stretch their silvery band beyond the utmost reach of the eye. The smoke of farm-houses rises on the distant landscape. The song of birds welcomes the day. The silent sea of houses and streets in the great city begins to heave and roar with the rising waves of toil and traffic. The merry voices of children mingle with the clatter of wheels and the cry of busy men. It is all life and action where an hour before silence and darkness reigned as in the tomb.

If we had seen but one such change from night to morning, we should think it a new creation. If we had been blind from birth, and in middle life we had waked from the long night of years to the full day of perfect

sight, we should be bewildered and beside ourselves with wonder and joy at the change. And notwithstanding we have been so long familiar with the "shining robe of day," and the transition from night to morning is more constant than the beating of our hearts and the breathing of the vital air, still the light is sweet and a pleasant thing it is to behold the sun.

Always and everywhere, in all the languages of the earth and in all the thoughts of men, light is the symbol of life, of beauty and of gladness. It falls on the sea, and the surf is arched with rainbows and the waves break and flash in cascades of silver. It falls on the mountains in the quiet hour of closing day, and the far heights are clothed in fluid gold. It falls on the clouds, and they sweep the plains of the sky like battalions of flying cherubim, or they rise into a temple of columned aisles and canopied thrones around the car of the setting sun. It falls on the summer shower, and builds an arch of sevenfold colors, glorious enough to surround the throne of heaven. It falls on the landscape, and bathes the hills and valleys and harvest-fields with tints and shadings of endless beauty. It falls on the autumn woods, and the dying foliage flames with brighter hues than the canvas ever took from the painter's hand. It falls on the flower, and the opening blossoms are clothed in splendors surpassing the state of kings. It falls on the camp of pilgrims in the desert, and they lift up their voices in thankful song. It falls upon wrecked mariners on the deep, and shows

them the approaching sail on the distant horizon, and the despairing crew welcome the sight as if it were the white wing of an angel flying to their rescue. It creeps through the creviced wall and falls on the floor of the dungeon, and the captive kneels upon the stone where it fell as if the feet of heavenly messengers had touched the spot and made it holy. It falls on the face of the dead, and clothes the king of terrors with serene and chastened beauty, and lifts the hearts of the sorrowing household to Him who is the resurrection and the life.

The inspired language of the Scriptures agrees with the prominence which we give to light in describing our daily experience and expressing our common thoughts. God began the six days' work of creation by sending forth light to chase the darkness from the face of the deep, and set up the reign of order and beauty in the realm of "Chaos and old Night." When God would send the last and sorest plague save one upon the Egyptians, and compel the proud heart of Pharaoh to let his people go, he took away light from all their habitations; he covered the whole land with a darkness so thick that the traveler stopped where the shadow fell upon his path, the laborer stood still in the field, the slave sank down in the slime-pit—each feeling himself to be imprisoned with an impenetrable wall on every side.

When God would give the tribes of Israel the assurance of his presence with them in all their wanderings,

he shone upon the sands of the desert with a pillar of light. He caused a shining cloud to hover between the cherubim in the holy place of the tabernacle. When they went out to war at his command, he led their armies with a banner-cloud of light. When that awful symbol shone upon the field, their enemies were smitten with dismay and the walls of fenced cities fell down at the sound of their trumpets. When it approached the border of the promised land, the river divided before it and the host of Israel passed over on dry ground.

For many ages after the tribes were settled in their inheritance the holy light accompanied the ark wherever it was carried. When the temple of Solomon was consecrated, the same supernatural glory appeared in the holy place. From that divine light there went forth oracular voices for the guidance and instruction of the people. When they obeyed the command which came forth from the "glory shrouded in its garb of fire," they were prosperous and strong. The plague was stayed from its visitation. The harvest filled the storehouse of the husbandman with abundance. No enemy prevailed against them. When they turned away backward, and refused to walk in the light of the Lord, they were smitten by the heathen; they were wasted by famine; they were divided against each other, and the whole land mourned.

And so all the way through the Scriptures, in history, in poetry and in parable, the light is the symbol

of safety and peace; to leave the guidance of the light is to lose hope and enter the kingdom of despair. When the patriarch Job would describe the state of the departed in terms of the utmost horror, he calls it a land of darkness, as darkness itself, where the very light is darkness. And Jesus, the Divine Teacher, ascribes the most abandoned and hopeless character to the man in whom the light has become darkness.

When the Almighty would humble and confound the complaining patriarch by showing him that to man in the broad day and in the bright noon there are mysteries past finding out, he puts to him the question which the most profound philosophers of our time have never been able to answer: Where is the fountain from which light springs? And how far does it fly upon its swift journeys? The question has been before the world for thirty-three centuries, and nobody has been able to tell the source or set bounds to the range of light.

The Most High is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment, to dwell in light which no man can approach unto and live, to send forth such a flood of light from his presence that the inhabitants of the heavenly world have no need of the sun and there is no night there. In the Psalms and the Prophets the happiest condition in life is the one upon which the Lord ever lifts the light of his countenance. He is an everlasting light to all who trust him. His companionship scatters the gloom of the valley of the shadow

of death. From his central throne light flows forth in waves of blessing to all creatures and to all worlds.

Thus all the way through the Scriptures light is the source of life and joy, the symbol of glory and of good, the guide of the erring, the help of the needy, the hope of the lost. When the Son of Man appears upon his great mission of mercy for the redemption of man, he is likened to the day-star that heralds the dawn; he is called the Sun of Righteousness, rising upon the benighted with healing in his wings; he proclaims himself the Light of the world; those who follow him are children of light. The infinite Creator, the self-existent and eternal Spirit, whom no eye hath seen or can see, is described as the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. God is light, and in him is no darkness at all.

These descriptions and comparisons were not made by philosophers, but by holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost. And it is remarkable that their language becomes more appropriate and significant the more thoroughly it is tested by the discoveries of modern science. Neither Milton, nor Goethe, nor Byron could describe the original creation in terms more simple or sublime than the language of Moses: "God said let there be light, and there was light." Neither Newton, nor Leibnitz, nor Herschel, nor Humboldt could say anything greater or truer of the Infinite One than the beloved disciple says in the words, "God is light." God is everywhere

by the very necessity of his nature, and light, by its immeasurable diffusion, gives us our grandest conception of the immensity of his being.

The mightiest telescope piercing the awful depths of space can find no bounds beyond which light has never passed. Go with the devout astronomer to his lonely watch-tower,

> "When the world is still and dim,
> And the stars flame out in their pomp of light
> Like thrones of the cherubim."

Set your eye to that mystic tube which sweeps the ranks of the fiery constellations as they move in orderly march across the plains of heaven. As you gaze there is a universe of worlds pictured upon the inner chamber of your eye. How far, think you, has the light traveled to bring you intelligence from the inhabited depths of immensity? How many years has it been flying, at the rate of twelve millions of miles a minute, before completing its journey? It started from its far-distant home before man was made in Paradise. It has been flying with inconceivable velocity, without a moment's rest, through all the intervening years, and the period of its flight is equal to all the generations of human history.

And yet turn the awful eye of the telescope in another direction—to some filmy haze that hangs on the face of the sky, looking as if it needed to be blown away by the wind to give a clear view of the depths beyond.

Set your eye steadily to the space-piercing tube, and you will see that floating mist flash out into the mingled blaze of a thousand suns. And the swift-winged messenger, which comes to tell you of their existence, has been on its way ten times as long as the race of man has lived on the earth. And nobody supposes that to be the farthest bound of the habitation of light. As you gaze you find yourself floating in the midst of an ethereal ocean, islanded with worlds, and it takes waves of light, flying twelve millions of miles a minute, sixty thousand years to pass over the space between you and that cluster of a thousand isles which you see floating in the great deep of space.

And when we take the words of the Apostle—"God is light"—and subject them to a modern and scientific interpretation, we are startled and confounded by the awful insight which it gives us into the immensity of his being. The mysterious, ethereal medium, whose lightning-winged waves produce the sensation of vision upon our eye, fills all the space and extends all the way to the most distant star, just as the air fills all the space in an audience-room, and its waves carry the sound of the speaker's voice to all that hear. And so the ever-living and eternal God, whom the inspired Apostle compares to light, occupies all space with the immensity of his being far as the light flies. If you could take the wings of the morning and fly for fifty thousand years in one direction, swift as the light and without a moment's rest, you would not reach the outer

walls of the world-peopled city in which God dwells and which he fills with his presence. In all that journey you would carry the conviction and the proof that God was with you as truly as you believe that the light falls on the page which you are reading, and also that there is One present with you whose face no human eye can see.

The Apostle wrote more wisely than he himself knew when he said, God is light. In a single sentence of three short words he gave the most advanced philosophers of our time their grandest conception of a Being who is everywhere at each and every moment of time. There is no life beyond the reach of light. It is ever in God that we live and move and have our being. If the light of the sun should be put out, in three days there would not be a trace of vegetable or animal life left on the face of the globe. The ocean of water which is always floating in the air above us would descend in deluges of rain and drifts of blinding snow. The rivers, the lakes and the sea would be changed to solid ice. The temperature of the whole atmosphere would fall two hundred and sixty degrees below the freezing-point, and no plant or animal could live in such cold for an hour. It is the silent and peaceful light which keeps the world from becoming such an icy grave, such a wilderness of death at any hour.

And yet of this subtle and mysterious agency we know nothing, except its effects, just as we know nothing of the essential being of God, except so far as we

see the manifestations of his presence and power. We see all things by the help of light, but the light itself we cannot see. We cannot weigh it in balances. We cannot measure its form or dimensions. We cannot touch its body or substance. We cannot hear the sound of its coming or going. Its presence in every drop makes no change of taste in the purest fountain. We cannot estimate the limit of its power. Its waves are shot from the sun and the more distant stars with such terrific force that it loses no velocity in flying a thousand million leagues.

The vibrations of air in producing the highest note of sound upon the ear are about eight thousand in a second. The waves or impulses of light in producing the sensation of color upon the eye are eight hundred millions of millions in a second. The force with which rays of light are shot from the sun to carry them so fast and so far is thirty thousand million times greater than the force with which a leaden ball falls from my hand to the earth. If a ray of light equaled the weight of a grain of sand, a single second of sunshine would shatter the earth to atoms.

The heat on the surface of the sun, which sends us our light, is so intense that to equal it on one square rod of ground we should be obliged to burn a thousand tons of coal a day. The brightest light that man can make, with all his chemical and galvanic apparatus, looks like a dark spot when held between the eye and the sun. The calcium light of the chemist is so in-

tense that you cannot look at it for an instant without blinding your eye. And yet that light is a dark spot compared with the sun.

And God keeps that great fire burning from century to century, thirteen hundred thousand times larger than the whole mass of the earth, and it is as bright to-day as when God said to the sun, "*Shine*," and he broke forth into the dawn. That great fire, which the breath of the Almighty has kindled to keep our earth warm, sends out two thousand million times as much light and heat as the whole earth receives, and yet the fiery fountain flows as free and full from age to age.

And there are other suns, a million times larger than our own—so many in number that we cannot count them—standing as landmarks and light-houses on the infinite ocean of space, blazing with a brightness that never grows dim, diffusing life and blessing with an affluence that knows no bound. And the mysterious essence in which they all float, the mighty medium which binds them all together in mutual relations and correspondences, the swift messenger that brings intelligence from them all, and reveals the nature and constitution of the most distant world, is light. We dig in the earth and find a hard substance; we smelt it in the fire, we weigh it in scales; we shape it with hammers, we test it with electric and chemical forces; we bend and draw and twist it in every way to find out its properties. And the light which comes on a journey of fifty thousand years tells us that if we could

explore the surface and dig in the soil of the distant world from which it sprang, we should find the same substance with the same properties there. Light tells us that a uniform, all-pervading energy rules through all worlds, gives all life, sustains all harmony and lives on unchanged from age to age.

No wonder, then, that the spirit of inspiration, in showing the Apostle unto what he should liken God, moved him to write the words, "God is light." God is like that most mighty and mysterious essence which fills all space, sustains all life, gives beauty and harmony to all worlds. And this immeasurable affluence of blessing which flows from the light is only a sign, a faint symbol, of the greater bounty of the Father of lights, from whom cometh down every good and perfect gift. The beneficence which flows from him is vast enough to fill the universe, and it is minute and special enough to clothe the humblest flower with beauty and make the feeblest life a blessing.

We have only to desire it, and this infinite and everlasting God will be unto us as a Father. He will look upon us with all the special and tender interest which the kind parent feels in his own children. He will make us partakers of his own nature, heirs of the riches and glories of his boundless kingdom. He will be with us through the whole journey of life, and his presence shall be our guide when we enter the valley of the shadow of death. When this perishable frame returns to the dust, he will clothe us with a body

which shall be as ethereal as the light, and which shall traverse his kingdom from world to world as swift and as far as the beams of the morning fly. To secure that blessed and glorious existence for our own we have only to believe Him who is the Light of the world—we have only to follow Him who has brought life and immortality to light.

I have seen, in a gay and luxurious city, a pleasure-garden brilliantly illuminated by night. Bright jets of flame ran along the climbing vines and spreading branches of trees without burning them. The winding walks and beds of flowers were fenced with fiery stars. Silvery streams of flame shot up like blades of polished steel among the grass. Arbors and grottoes and arcades were lighted with lilies and laburnums whose corollas were crowns of fire. Here and there the spray of fountains fell like a shower of gems, and the sound of rushing waters mingled with the swell of soft music that rose and died at intervals upon the evening air. At a central position stood an architectural structure built like a temple, with columns and arches and corridors, shining as if they had been framed of solid light in the chambers of the morning for the palace of the king of day.

And in all the walks and avenues and central squares were multitudes of people moving to and fro. Some were young and beautiful; others were wrinkled with age and bowed with infirmity. Some were dressed in garments that princes might wear at the high festival

of kings, and others were clothed in the coarse garb of poverty, and they saluted their friends with the calloused hands of labor. But all courted the light and were happy. They flitted to and fro on the brightest walks, and they hovered around the central pavilion, where the blaze of illumination was most intense and the swell of music rolled forth with the sweetest cadence upon the air. And I thought, If man, at great expense and by exhausting the utmost resources of art, can make an earthly garden seem so much like Paradise for an hour—if an earthly prince can give the people of his capital so much joy by scattering lights among the trees and fountains of his palace-grounds—how much more glorious shall be the gardens of the blessed when the King himself walks among his ransomed host, and the light which fills the universe with blessing shines in his face as he calls their names and owns them as his brethren!

And even now, in the sweet anticipations of faith, we can walk with the King and rejoice in his light. He comes to ask our companionship, and he offers to guide us in the safe way. From his presence flows the only light that has ever dawned upon the path of the hopeless and the wandering. He comes to the family circle and makes an earthly home the vestibule of heaven. He comes to the dark chamber of affliction, and to the weary sufferer and the broken-hearted mourner there is no more night. He walks with us in the busy street, and our hearts burn within us all

the way. He comes to the counting-room, and the perishable goods of the merchant are transformed into the treasures of heaven. He comes to the workshop, and the place becomes holy as the house where Paul wrought at tentmaking in Corinth. He comes to the poor, the lonely and heart-broken, and his presence charms away all their complaints and sorrows. He comes to the learned, the gifted, the mighty, and they meet him in all the lofty walks of science, they see his sovereign Hand in all the events of history, they crown him above all the glories of the world. He comes to the dungeon, the rack and the fire, where his faithful ones are tortured for a testimony unto his name, and they sing for joy amid the agonies of martyrdom. He comes to the silent chamber, where a weeping household are waiting to see a Christian die, and both the living and the dying feel that the bitterness of death is past when they see his face. Surely such a Friend, Guide, Comforter is entitled to say, I am the Light of the world.

Lightnings—God's Messengers.

Canst thou send lightnings, that they may go, and say unto thee, Here we are?—Job xxxviii. 35.

THE SECRET PLACE OF THUNDER.

VII.

LIGHTNINGS—GOD'S MESSENGERS.

ONE of the most sublime displays of the powers and terrors of Nature that I ever witnessed was a thunder-storm at night among mountains. The black clouds came down upon the lofty peaks and ridges, and the narrow defiles, lighted up by the vivid lightnings, looked like long galleries in some vast prison-house or subterranean cavern, walled in by the impassable hills and roofed over by the impenetrable clouds. The quick flashes, that displayed everything with dazzing brilliancy for an instant, made the darkness deeper and blacker by sudden contrast with the blinding light. The awful silence which followed the gleam of the lightning made the thunder seem louder when it came with a crash which shook the solid earth, and rolled away with mingled and prolonged reverberations among the mountains.

The blaze and the peal followed each other in more rapid succession as the fighting armies of the storm drew near, until the whole air shone with a rustling flame, and the echoes mingled and multiplied, peal on peal, in one unceasing roar. The sheeted torrents that

hung on the face of the cliff were changed to liquid fire. The clouds that swept in black and billowy masses through the defiles appeared like the sulphurous and scorching breath of some fire-breathing monster, beating down the mountains in his rage with his mighty hammer and rending the rocks in his blind and terrible madness. When the first dash of rain fell, it seemed as if the suffering heavens and the shaken earth were dissolved in tears of terror and anguish under the burning stroke of the lightning and the wrathful fury of the storm. Soon every other sound was deafened by the roar of the falling rain and the rush of the swollen torrents leaping down the mountain. The lightning ceased, the thunder died away; and then it seemed as if the descending floods had put out the flame which threatened to set the heavens on fire and burn the mountains to their base.

One must be very insensible not to be moved with feelings of awe when witnessing such a terrible conflict of the elements among mountains at night. And it gives us one of the loftiest conceptions of the power of the infinite Jehovah when we consider that his word alone can command the clouds and the winds. He can call the swift lightnings, and they shall respond with thundering voices, "Here we are."

When the Almighty answered Job out of the whirlwind, he claimed it as a peculiar prerogative of his own to send out lightnings and direct the course of the

storm. The sphere of human knowledge and power has been greatly enlarged in modern times. But no man has risen high enough in mastery over the elements to sit as sovereign in the secret place of thunder. No skill or science or invention of man has revealed the hiding of God's power in the lightning.

And God is just as sovereign in all the conflicts and agitations of human society as he is in the warring elements of the skies. He can command the lightnings of human passion and speak peace to the fiercest tempests that ever rage in the human soul. It requires a higher exercise of faith to believe that God rules in the proud and imperial realm of mind than it does to believe that he can chain the stormy wind and direct the stroke of the quick lightning. We involuntarily associate divine power and sovereignty with the most awful phenomena of nature. We are apt to forget that the hearts of men, the secret will and the sovereign choice, are in the hands of God, and he can turn them as he turns the rivers among the hills and moves the clouds on the path of the wind. But it would be a very dark prospect for human society and the world if we could not believe that the Almighty hand can restrain the violence of human passion and direct the fiery thunderbolts of war. He who gathers the clouds and makes the lightnings his messengers can also make the more wasteful lightnings of man's wrath the minister of mercy and the means of good. The great Being from whom comes all life and energy will not suffer

any of the elements of his creation to become too strong for his control. He can flash light into the dark councils of wickedness, and expose them to contempt before the world. He can blast the mightiest powers of the earth with the thunder-stroke of his righteous indignation. The lightnings of war that terrify the nations come and go at his bidding. The thunders of battle and revolution that shake the foundations of the world are silent at his word.

This is our unfailing source of satisfaction in studying the history of the past; this is the source of our feeling of safety while observing the wants and perils of the hour. Let the tempest, in its wildest and most wasteful fury, teach us this great lesson, which was written for us by the inspired Psalmist so long ago: The Lord sitteth king upon the floods; the Lord on high is mightier than many waters. Trust in him and be strong. In the day of trouble, flee for shelter to the shadow of his throne and have no fear. Every child of God owes it to the great privilege and honor of his faith to show that in all the perils and trials of life he can be fearless and firm; in all the sorrows and afflictions of life he can rejoice and be glad. Christian faith never teaches a more important lesson than it does by manifesting firmness and serenity of mind amid all the temptations of the world and the tempests of passion.

The conquerors of the world are the men who can be calm and self-possessed in the midst of agitation. The

teachers and benefactors of the world are the men who never lose faith in God, and who inspire faith in others by the strength and constancy of their own. The truest comforters of the afflicted, the angels of mercy to the suffering, the messengers of peace to troubled hearts, are those who find good in everything, and who need no hard processes of reasoning to convince themselves and others that God can make all things work together for good to them that love him. It may cost great sacrifices to gain such faith. But it cannot cost too much. It is the one pearl of infinite price, for the possession of which the purchaser must begin by giving all that he has.

The lightning is the fit representative of the unrivaled sovereignty of the infinite God. We have indeed learned something of its mysterious powers and properties. We proudly speak of making it our post-boy to carry messages around the earth. We have stretched an iron thread over the mountains and across the plains and under the seas. And by calling the lightning to our aid we have made the slender wire thrill with the pulses of thought from nation to nation and from continent to continent. But what is the amount of electric force which man can control compared with the lightnings which answer to the Divine call in the heavens with a voice which shakes the earth, saying, "Here we are"?

The battery which sends a pulsation of electric force under the whole breadth of the Atlantic Ocean may

be so small that you can wear it as a thimble upon your finger. The battery of thunder which is answering to God's will in the heavens as I write these words on this hot summer's night, spreads over thousands of miles of charged cloud. It stretches away westward to the Alleghanies and southward to the sea, and every particle of mist in the black cloud which darkens the sky holds the concealed fire of the unconquerable lightning. Nothing can stand before the fiery bolt which it shoots down upon the defenceless earth. The harder the substance which it strikes, the more sure it is to be melted or shivered to atoms. The more resistance it encounters, the more certain it is to move on its way and rend or burn its own path as it goes.

It was not therefore simply from a concession to the ignorance and superstition of the time that the Bible so often made the lightning the representative of the power and sovereignty of the infinite God. When the Almighty would plague the Egyptians for their pride and their unwillingness to let his people go, he thundered marvelously with his voice from the heavens, and the fire of his lightnings ran along the ground. When the Philistines came up from the plains of Sharon and laid waste the borders of Ephraim and Benjamin, the prophet Samuel cried unto the Lord for help against the heathen. And the Lord thundered with a great thunder upon the Philistines. and they were smitten before the armies of Israel. For a whole generation the giants of Gath and the princes of Askelon

did not recover from the terrors of the day when the lightnings of Jehovah smote them at the heights of Gibeon and drove them down the rocky pass of Bethhoron.

When Samuel would show his people that they had acted presumptuously in asking for a king to reign over them, he cried unto the Lord in the time of the wheat-harvest, when rain never falls in the land of Israel, and behold the heavens were darkened with clouds and mighty thunders shook the hills. When the Most High came down upon Sinai with the ten thousands of his angels for the proclamation of his fiery law before all the tribes of Israel, the earth trembled and the eternal hills did bow, and there were thunders and lightnings and a thick cloud upon the mount. When the Apostle John was caught up to Paradise in the vision of the Apocalypse, he saw the throne of the Lamb before the sea of glass arched with rainbows and girt with lamps of fire, and out of the throne proceeded lightnings and thunderings and voices.

And it is not difficult to see a profound and suggestive reason why the Bible so often makes these most awful phenomena of nature accompany the most gracious and instructive manifestations of the infinite God. It is undoubtedly to teach us that while we love we should fear; while we trust we should tremble; while we come boldly unto the throne of grace and confidently ask our Father's help in every time of need, as we are invited and commanded to do in his word, we should

not forget that for sinful creatures like us it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

Lightnings and thunderings come forth from the throne of the Lamb to teach us that the most merciful One is also the most mighty; the most forgiving is the most just; nothing is so much to be sought as the love, and nothing is so much to be feared as the wrath, of the Lamb. Power without pity is cold and repulsive. Pity without power is weak and helpless. Both are united in the throne of the Lamb—the power to protect and to punish, the pity to sympathize and to save. The seat of mercy and the throne of grace must needs send forth lightnings and thunders to teach us that He who so freely forgives has the power and the right to punish. He who humbled himself unto the birth in Bethlehem and the death of Calvary holds the keys of life and death. The manger and the cross are overshadowed and glorified by the crown and the throne. The just God is the Saviour. The King of heaven is the servant of all. The infinitely Blessed is the Man of Sorrows.

Oh how mightily and lovingly are we drawn to this awful and infinite combination of power and pity, justice and mercy, the lightnings of wrath and the relentings of love! The cloud of threatening is the dark background on which God hangs out the bow of peace and reconciliation. We should not heed the still small voice of tenderness and pity if we were not sometimes awed to silence and attention by the voice of threaten-

ing and thunder. It makes forgiveness precious when we know that it comes from One who pardons at his own expense, and saves by his own sacrifice. And there is no hope for the man who is not melted into penitence and thankfulness when he sees that infinite patience and unutterable love alone are saving him from the lightnings and thunders of wrath.

The lightning shows us how completely and helplessly we are in God's hand every moment. It does not strike often enough to keep us in perpetual terror. It never leaves us to the full assurance that we are perfectly safe when we hear the voice of God's thunder in the heavens. No science or invention of man has found a perfect safeguard against the stroke of the fiery bolt.

The dark magazine of the rain-cloud comes thundering up the sky on a sultry summer's afternoon. The warning peal waxes louder and more frequent, and the lightning flames with a more vivid flash, as the solemn march of the gathering hosts moves on. The air is still. The foliage hangs motionless on the trees. The grazing cattle lift up their heads and look with mute and bewildered gaze upon the coming storm. The birds wheel in wild circles through the air, or hie to the shelter of their nests. All Nature stands in silent and awful expectation. At last the clouds shut out the sun. Suddenly the wind rises with a roaring, rushing sound in the distance. The black battalions that fly before the crystalline columns of the white rain

sweep around the horizon to the right and the left, and charge up the steep ascent to the zenith. Then, with one blinding flash, one terrific and stunning peal, the torrents descend and the whole air is darkened with the falling flood.

Thus in one brief hour the clear blue plain of the sky is darkened with the smoke of clouds, and swept by the impetuous charge of fighting winds, and the earth is shaken with the peal of mighty thunders; and we can only look on as passive witnesses and wait till the contending elements have exhausted themselves with their own raging. Thus are we made to see what helpless creatures we are in the presence of those great and mighty forces of Nature which God holds in his own hand. The storm does not come at our bidding, and we cannot send it away. The shaft of fire which we see from our windows, descending with frequent and fearful crash, may fall on us at any moment, and we cannot avert the stroke. Sometimes it strikes the most secure and spares the most exposed. Sometimes, of two friends standing side by side—as happened in the case of Martin Luther—one is taken and the other left.

On a sultry summer's afternoon I was writing at my desk in my study, as I am now. Across the street, two or three doors off, was an open window, and before it, in the chamber, two boys playing. As the sun went down a dark cloud was seen forming swiftly in the west. It spread out its black wings northward and southward.

like some mighty bird of prey, and sailed silently up the evening sky. Suddenly there came a rush of wind from the north-west, and in a few moments the whole heavens were black with careering clouds. A dash of rain followed, then a blaze of lightning and a solitary peal of thunder, so quick and condensed that it seemed like the flash and report of a cannon. And when the peal died away one of the two boys, who had ceased from their play to look forth from the open window upon the wild clouds, was lying dead upon the floor of the chamber, and the other was standing unharmed by his side. That black cloud, as it came up the sky, brought a single thunderbolt in its bosom. There was a whole city of towers and steeples and roofs and chimney-tops for the one solitary bolt to strike. But it passed them all, and shot down with fatal precision upon the head of that one boy. In a half hour the setting sun shone out beneath the lifted cloud; the rainbow hung its arch of peace and beauty upon the path of its departure; the world looked brighter than it did before to all in that city save the one family that were weeping in terror and agony over their dead child. So does the lightning write out with its finger of flame the repeated lesson of the divine word—In God's hand is the soul of every living thing and the breath of all mankind. So does the crashing thunderbolt verify the words of the gentle and compassionate Jesus—One shall be taken and the other left.

The angel of death enters a silent street at midnight.

In one house is an old man weighed down with years and infirmity, and he is wondering why he has been left to live so long, to be a burden to himself and others. But the angel of death passes that door without entering. In another house a pale and emaciated victim of incurable disease is writhing with pain and panting for breath, praying in agony that every hour may be the last. The angel of death looks in at the curtained window and only says, "Not yet," and passes on. In another house an intoxicated husband and father has just come home from the scene of midnight revelry. And he is wreaking his violence and blasphemy upon his weeping wife and his terrified children. It would be a relief to that family if the angel of death would touch that miserable monster with his cold finger and say, "Come with me." The world would be purer and happier when he is gone. But the dread messenger passes silently on, leaving the wicked to live and the innocent to suffer. In another house is a wretched creature who has fallen so low in sin and shame as to choose death rather than life. She has taken the oblivious draught, that she may sleep this night and wake no more. And now she is rousing slowly to the consciousness that the vain attempt has only added to her misery. But the angel of death enters not that chamber where his presence has been sought and the return of life is the renewal of sorrow.

In another chamber, sleeping calmly as if kept by guardian angels, is a fair and healthful child, the joy

and hope of a widowed mother's heart—a child whose voice of gladness rings like the song of birds through the house all day; a child that has been watched and guarded and gratified with idolizing affection all its life. And the angel of death touches the cherub brow of that little one and says, "This child is mine." And when the morning comes it brings no light to the sad chamber where a mother sits stunned and distracted, gazing upon the still face of the dead. The little child, so loved, so full of hope and joy, is taken, and so many others who loathe life and deserve to die are left. So God's silent providence teaches the same lesson which the crashing thunderbolt hurls from the clouds, the same warning which the meek and lowly Jesus utters, "Be ye also ready, for in such an hour as ye think not, the Son of man cometh." True faith and filial affection will be ever ready to say when the thunder rolls, "It is the voice of my Father. Let him speak in the storm or in the still small voice; his child shall ever be glad to hear."

The lightning is the symbol of the sovereign Will, both in blessing and in affliction. Sometimes the dazzling flash gives sight to the blind and takes away sight from those who can see. Sometimes it gives speech to the dumb and hearing to the deaf, and again it takes away the faculty from those who can both speak and hear. It restores the withered arm to life, and it strikes the whole frame with the paralysis of death. It kills the bird on the wing, the wild beast in

the forest and the fish in the waters. It hastens the growth of the seed that is buried in the earth, and it destroys the life of the tree that has been growing for ages. It smites the mother with death while she folds her child to her bosom for protection, and it leaves the infant unhurt in her arms. It falls on the roof of the house from above; it shoots up from the cellar beneath; it dashes through both walls like a cannon-shot from side to side. It touches the tallest branch of the mountain pine with its fiery finger, and the tree never puts forth a green leaf again.

And this mysterious agency, this mighty minister of life and death, is not alone in the storm that darkens the heavens with its clouds and shakes the earth with its thunders. It is over us and around us and beneath us and within us every moment. It lives in the blade of grass. It shines in the drop of dew. It descends in the falling rain. It gives the starry form to the snow-flake and the streaming light to the aurora. It girdles the land and the sea and the mountains with unseen currents of rapid motion and resistless power. It lives in all life, it moves in all motion, it dwells in all space. It thrills in sympathy with living organs in all thought and feeling. It telegraphs between mind and matter in all mental action. The working brain must feel the touch of its subtle power, or it will cease to kindle into flame the thoughts that thunder forth in speech or burn along the living page.

With all our skill and practice in insulation we can-

not imprison this subtle power so closely as to prevent all escape. We cannot compel it to travel alone upon our lines. We can master only the smallest fraction of its power. The chained messenger that goes obediently upon our errands in the calm, throws off its fetters and breaks away from all our lines and batteries when the invisible armies of electric power come out for a great field-day, shouting unto each other in thundering voices, and sweeping in stormy waves through the troubled air from continent to continent.

And this mysterious and unmasterable power, call it by what name we may, should certainly teach us how utterly dependent we are upon the greater power of Him in whom we live and move and have our being. When the lightning leaps from the cloud, and strikes a living man to the earth in the presence of many others, every one feels awed and subdued as in the presence of the infinite God. And yet the power which strikes the living man to the earth in a thunderstorm is slumbering in every breath of air we breathe. It flows in every vein with our life-blood. It follows the course of every nerve in all our sensations of pain and pleasure. It pervades every particle of our bodies and comes into contact with every faculty of our mind. Should not that power tell us by its silent and salutary presence, as well as by its thunder-crash, that God is everywhere?

When Moses heard the voice of Jehovah speaking from the flame of the burning bush, he hid his face, for

he was afraid to look upon God. When the keepers of the tomb of Christ saw the face of the angel of the resurrection shining like lightning, they trembled and became as dead men, because they thought themselves to be in the presence of the infinite God. Everything we see is so full of electric force that it can be made to yield a spark of fire to our touch. In the frosty air of a winter's day we can send out sparks that shall kindle a flame from our own fingers, and yet ourselves not feel the heat of the fire with which our whole frame is charged. The ancient Hebrews called it the fire of God when they saw it descending from the cloud. Should not that mystic flame make us feel the presence of Him whose voice Moses heard in the fire of the burning bush?

I have stood beside the telegraphic operator while he made a signal and received an answer over seven hundred miles of country, and the answer followed the question in the shortest time that I can make one blow follow another with my hand. I was filled with awe by the simple experiment, for it made we feel that I was in the presence of an unseen power that pervades all nature and surpasses all comprehension. It helped me to see a little more clearly that I myself live and move and have my being in Him from whom all power comes, from whose presence none can flee. It helped me to see that everything in the universe may be bound together by so many strong and secret bonds as to be but one thought to the infinite Mind. The wave of

electric force which I start with one stroke of my hand may extend around the earth and beyond the sun and stars.

The compassions of the infinite God, which are poured forth for my comfort and protection, may touch the hearts of beings in millions of worlds and carry waves of blessing to the farthest bounds of creation. The universe, with all its worlds, is the work of one Mind, and that Mind is God. The life and support of all creatures flow from one fountain, and that fountain is the love of God. The sum of all duty and the source of all happiness is obedience to one law, and that law is the will of God. Everything in the word of revelation and everything in the works of nature conspire to tell us that God is all and in all. The greatest, wisest, purest, happiest man is he who sees most of God and walks most closely with him in the daily paths of life.

This mysterious power, which sleeps in the still air and thunders in the dark cloud, is a beneficent power. Its office is to preserve life, not to kill. Where it destroys one it saves a million. It flows in harmless and healthful currents through all living bodies, and only in here and there an instance does it rend and destroy the receptacle of life. It does no injury to bodies that welcome its coming. It blasts and burns only when resisted. The slender blade of grass, the pointed spires of the bearded grain, the trembling leaf, the delicate tendril of the vine, draw the lightning from the cloud silently and safely, while the solid rock is

rent with a crash and the loftiest monument of man's pride is leveled with the dust.

God's providences are all beneficent to those who welcome their coming. They speak in wrath only to those who resist and disobey. God's word is all full of kindness and compassion to those who long for his favor. It speaks in threatening and indignation only to the heedless and rebellious. When Christ spoke the healing word in behalf of the afflicted, they were sometimes cast down and torn with a greater torture. The new life flowing into the paralyzed limb restored, first of all, the lost capacity for pain. But it was life nevertheless. And so, when Christ calls the wayward and disobedient to a purer and happier life, the first signs of compliance with that call are apt to be tears of penitence and expressions of sorrow. Nevertheless, it is a better and a blessed life that they thus begin. All of God's messages are love to the loving heart. When the Divine Spirit strives with the resisting and the disobedient, they are troubled and agitated, and sharp arrows of conviction sink deep into their hearts. When the same Divine Spirit comes to the humble and penitent, he is a messenger of peace—he gives rest to the weary soul. To those who love and long for the Holy Comforter his coming is like the descent of the gentle dew upon the springing grass and the silent light upon the opening flower.

Little Things.

There be four things which are little upon the earth, but they are exceeding wise.—PROV. xxx. 24.

VIII.

LITTLE THINGS.

THE ancient sage was safe in saying that "There be four things which are little upon the earth, yet exceeding wise." If he had lived in our time, he might have multiplied the four by fifty thousand, and yet the saying would have fallen within the limits of human knowledge. The world has made great progress in three thousand years. And still the wisest of men have much to learn from the little things of the earth.

The research of modern times has discovered millions of living creatures so small that the unassisted eye of man has never seen them—the sagacious mind of Solomon and the masterly genius of Aristotle never suspected their existence. And the more we know of their nature and habits, the more we wonder at the wisdom and power which God has conferred upon the little things of earth. If we compare ourselves with creatures that are counted a pest and crushed without a thought, we shall find that in many respects they have greatly the advantage of us. The sum of faculties bestowed upon man is indeed immensely greater; and yet in some one particular he may be surpassed by the

least and lowest of the brute creation. He has all the prerogatives of power and intellect fitting him to be crowned with glory and honor, and to have all things put under his feet—the beast of the field, the fowl of the air and the fish of the sea. And yet he may see much to excite his wonder and admiration in the worm of the dust and the insect of a day.

If we could move through the air with as great relative speed as the common house-fly, we could cross the Atlantic Ocean and return in the time that we spend at our breakfast-table every morning. Look out of a railway car when it is in the most rapid motion on a summer's day, and you will see winged creatures sporting in the air, moving up and down, backward and forward, keeping abreast of you all the while, just as if the car were standing still. The speed of sixty miles an hour counts for nothing with the little creature that plays at the window, apparently without making an extra stroke of the wing to keep up with the flying train.

If we could walk on the earth at as rapid a relative gait, or change our position with as great agility, as insects that we hate and crush whenever we find them, we could spring to the top of the tallest steeple at a single bound—we could make the fable of the giant taking a fifth of a mile at a step more a reality than a fiction. If we could build ships that would carry us at as great a comparative speed as the boat-fly skims the surface of the water, we could leave our homes at

noon, pass around the whole circumference of the earth, and return with the meridian sun directly above us all the way. Our progress would keep pace with the movement of the day, and we should only need to keep going to experience a literal fulfillment of the promise, "Thy sun shall no more go down." If our houses of worship were as large and strong in proportion to the size of the builders as the structures reared by the termites in Africa, we should be covered by domes rising five thousand feet above our heads, we should pass in and out through doors and arches four times higher than the highest church-spire in city or country, and our roofs would be strong enough to support the weight of a million men.

If we grew as fast from birth as the silkworm, we should equal the size of the elephant in a month, and we should devour food enough to support an army of three thousand men. If our organs of vision were only as numerous and complex as those of the butterfly, we should have sixty thousand perfect eyes set in our brows to catch every hue and form of the view before us, and an extra pair to serve as watch-towers on the top of the head. If our vocal organs were as strong proportionally as those of the canary bird, we could make ourselves heard farther than the cannonade of Gettysburg or Waterloo without straining our voices. If our bodies were as well protected against violence as those of some creatures no bigger than a pin's head, we could stand all the cannon-shot in the world, and

mind it as little as we now mind the smallest particle of dust that is blown in our faces by the wind.

I run over these comparative estimates simply to show that the infinite God has not gone to the extent of his power in making us the creatures that we are. We have only to examine the little things of earth to learn that he has bestowed on them some one form of intelligence or power vastly superior to the corresponding faculty bestowed on us. The sum of God's gifts to man in his whole spiritual and immortal nature is indeed infinitely greater than all bestowed upon the brute. But he has endowed the smallest creatures with some one faculty in greater measure, to show us how easily he could increase our capacities for action and enjoyment a thousand-fold, and not do anything more difficult for him or wonderful to us than he is doing all around us every day.

The vulture scents its food, the eagle sees its prey, the bee builds its cell, the spider spins its web, the swallow seeks its home, with an accuracy which would be nothing less than miraculous in man. God has bestowed, in separate gifts, upon the smallest creatures a degree of power and intelligence and activity which, if combined in one and given to man, would enable him to hurl the mountains into the sea and shake the foundations of the earth. These present limitations of our faculties are evidently designed to guard against abuse. If our present faculties were suddenly enlarged, and our command over the elements of nature

were proportionally increased, we should be like children playing with fire without knowing its quick and terrible power. Our Father is too wise and kind to give us faculties which we should only use in destroying ourselves.

When the spirits of the just have been made perfect, it will be safe and easy for the Giver of all gifts to enlarge their capacities a thousand-fold. They may then be made like the cherubim, full of eyes to survey the universe with an all-pervading vision. They may move with the speed of the lightning in any direction and to any distance they please and nothing have power to oppose their progress. They may be able to work without weariness and without rest, and always find pleasant and profitable work to do. They may be so perfectly guarded against accident and injury that neither fire nor flood nor force of any kind can hurt them. Knowledge may come to them as easily as it came to Adam in Paradise—as easily as instinct comes to the bird and the bee.

All this wondrous enlargement of faculty may God bestow upon man in the new heavens and the new earth. And the extraordinary gifts which he has already bestowed upon the little things of the earth lead us to expect that he will give more and greater to his redeemed and immortal children. He who gives a small insect power to fly over a thousand miles of ocean without resting, can surely give the soul of man power to pass from world to world with the speed of

light and with a wing that never tires. He who forms fifty thousand perfect eyes for the use of a creature that lives and dies in a day, may surely give more than five senses to that spiritual body which shall never die.

The Bible says, Eye hath not seen, ear hath not heard, heart hath not conceived the greatness and the glory of the home which God hath prepared for those that love him. But let our present faculty of vision be enlarged fifty thousand-fold; let our ears be opened to take in the divine harmonies that roll through the eternal space from world to world; let our minds be gifted with angelic power to wander through immensity, where height and depth are lost in the infinite blaze of careering suns, and then the little world in which we now live, with all its fields of glory and parade of power, will seem like a half-forgotten dream when the night is past. This earth, which we now tread upon, and which seems so great with its voiceful seas and eternal mountains, will seem like a single mote in the sunbeam when we have the eye to see and the mind to measure the immensities of creation. The happiest hour of this earthly life will be remembered as the faint gleam of a falling star amid the splendors of that day to which there shall be no night. And all the mystic power and hidden wisdom of these little things of earth are appointed to raise our hearts and hopes to that glorious state when the perfect shall come and the partial shall be done away.

It is the little things of earth that impress us most with the great power of God. When we look up to the starry heavens, when we wander among the solitudes of snow-clad mountains, when we survey the vast and melancholy sea, we feel ourselves to be standing in the presence of the Infinite. We are awed and elevated by sensible contact with the mighty workmanship of the eternal Mind. But in that case we are prepared for the emotions which we experience. We expect to be moved because we have designedly presented ourselves in the holy place, where Divine Power enthrones itself in the height and depth of its great works.

But we have no such preparation of mind and heart for the contemplation of the Infinite when we seek it in the little things of the earth. We are startled and confounded when we see what unconquerable energy, what mysterious intelligence, what resistless power, what invulnerable life God has conferred upon things so small that it has taken the keenest science and the mightiest instruments to discover their existence. And some of these little things, that were large enough to be named in the meagre science of Solomon, are described in the prophetic word with every expression of power and sublimity. When they are sent forth in great numbers as a scourge upon the earth, they become more resistless and terrible to man than the earthquake, the pestilence or the storm.

"The locusts," says the wise man, "have no king, yet

go they forth all of them by bands." They form in compact ranks, like the battalions of a disciplined army, and they march at the command of a divine and mysterious will. One spirit rules through the mighty hosts, and they come in numbers without number—countless as the snow-flakes and dark as the clouds. It is impossible to imagine the greatness of the multitude. The advancing column has been known to be five hundred miles in length. In one instance a traveler directed his course across their line of motion, and he rode forty miles before he reached the edge of the living stream. When they travel on the earth they cover everything as completely as the deep river fills its bed. When they fly in the air they darken the sun, and the sound of their wings is as the sound of many waters. No green thing is left in the path of their march, and the earth behind them is scorched and burnt as if it had been swept by devouring fire. At morn the peasant looks forth from his cottage door upon cultivated fields and laden orchards and blooming gardens. At noon the army of locusts has passed, and there is not a flower or green leaf or a blade of grass to be seen in the whole landscape. The desolation produced by armies is nothing compared to the ravages of locusts. Famine and pestilence follow their march. The hearts of men are hardened with hunger. The dead lie unburied in their own houses, and the living devour each other in their madness and misery.

The Arabs of ancient and modern times ascribe to

these little creatures the terror and power of the strongest beasts of the earth. They say they have the face of a horse, the eyes of an elephant, the neck of a bull, the horns of a deer, the chest of a lion, the belly of a scorpion, the wings of an eagle, the thighs of a camel, the feet of an ostrich and the tail of a serpent. The prophet Joel says they have the teeth of lions, the appearance of horsemen and of strong people set in battle array. They run like mighty men, and their march is like the noise of chariots upon the mountains. The earth quakes before them, the heavens tremble, the sun and moon are darkened and the stars withdraw their shining.

When they appear advancing by millions of millions it seems as if the dust of the earth had been made all alive. There is no escape from the moving column. "It is terrific, irresistible, universal, overwhelming—penetrating everywhere, overspreading all things, excluded by nothing." The Emperor Alexander of Russia once sent out an army of thirty thousand men in the vain effort to stop their progress. They sweep across the plain and flow up the mountain side and descend the steep like a cataract. They roll over rocks and walls, houses and hedges, filling up the trenches that have been dug and putting out the fires that have been kindled to stop them. They enter windows and doors and chimneys, covering beds and tables and furniture, filling all wells and springs and fountains of water. They descend into the deepest valleys. They flow over

mountains fourteen thousand feet high. They defy alike sword and spear and cannon. They pass right through the ranks of armies. They plunder the camp of the conqueror as easily as the garden of the peasant. They pass over city walls, they penetrate fortresses and palaces as easily as they traverse the open plain. They are omnipresent, like the pestilence; they are resistless, like the tornado; they are mysterious, like the judgments of God.

And these little things of the earth show us how minute and resistless and pervasive is the power which governs the world. When God would send the most terrible scourge upon disobedient nations, he does not need to shake the heavens with mighty thunders or to call forth fountains and cataracts of fire from the bosom of the earth. He does not need to cast the mountains into the sea or cause the deep to overwhelm the land. He need only breathe upon the small dust of the ground, and the air shall be darkened and the earth shall be desolated by millions of millions of living creatures, whose march no force or skill of man can stop, whose appetite no fruit of the garden or field or vineyard can satisfy. The smallest and most contemptible creatures become terrible and resistless in the hands of Him who can call them in countless myriads, and command them to carry destruction and desolation wherever they go. The man of science cannot tell how or where the mighty armies are raised. The man of power cannot prevent their coming. The man of

faith can only submit and say, This is the finger of God.

And there are little things of earth which are even more mysterious and not less mighty. Within our memory a strange blight came upon a single plant in Ireland, and the wail of starving millions was sent around the world. And yet the cause of that terrible calamity was one of the little things which God uses in his great works. It was so minute, so mysterious, that the wisest men, by long and deep searching, and the most philanthropic, by the offer of great reward, have not yet found out its nature or origin. They have not yet discovered any means of checking its ravages.

The rust, the mildew and the weevil are among the least of living things on the earth. The wisest of men know little of their nature. And yet God needs no mightier ministers of vengeance to destroy the food of nations and make millions mourn. A living dust forms on the bearded grain, and broad fields of wheat yield nothing but straw and stubble in the time of harvest. A little fly comes out of the earth and stings the forming fruit, and the husbandman cuts down his orchard in despair. A little brown creature, whose body is no more than a quarter of an inch long, goes out to sport in the pine forests of the South; and thousands of acres of trees, as goodly as the cedars of Lebanon, are changed to a wilderness of lifeless trunks and leafless branches.

The ocean is sometimes red and green and yellow

over many miles of its surface. Sometimes it rises and swells in waves of silvery light, as if the whole surface were moulded and medallioned in fire. Sometimes the snow in Arctic regions is crimsoned with the hue of blood, as if it had been made the battle-field of nations. And the color and the light in all these cases comes from the presence of countless living creatures, so small that five millions could march abreast in a compact line along a street of moderate breadth.

And it is by the toil of these small creatures that God is ever changing and rebuilding the earth. The bottom of the sea is their burial-ground, piled so high with their bodies that in some places they come to the surface and make islands for trees to grow upon and living men to gather in cities and kingdoms. They have built up a breakwater more than a thousand miles long to keep the sea from devouring the shore of Australia. No skill or toil of man could have raised so strong and enduring a barrier against the ceaseless onset of the waves. Whole ranges of mountains are made of the skeletons of creatures so small that we need the highest powers of the microscope to see any sign of organization in the handful of dust which is nothing but millions of their bodies. The fine powder of polishing slate is nothing but the unbroken and perfectly-formed shells of once living creatures, so small that forty thousand millions are contained in a cubic inch of the stone. The city of Richmond is built upon a bed of flinty marl, the whole mass of which

twenty-five feet deep, was once alive with creatures a thousandth part of an inch in length. The flint that strikes fire on the face of steel is made of the minute skeletons of creatures that once lived and enjoyed life as we live and move to-day. The sand of the great Sahara in Africa is an ocean of fossil shells that were once inhabited by living beings. One class of these living creatures, fully endowed with all the organs and faculties of perfect animal life, is so small that eight millions could live in the hollow shell of a grain of mustard seed.

And God has put forth the most wondrous power and wisdom in the creation of these living things with which the air, the earth and the waters are filled. He has displayed infinite skill in making creatures so small that we cannot see them with the unassisted eye; so numerous that we cannot conceive their number; so mighty that they have done more to change the face of the earth than all the works of man in all time. It is equally impossible to find out God's work to perfection in beings so small that millions sport in the drop of water, or in worlds so vast that they fill the universe with light. And in this minute attention to things that are least the Divine Architect teaches us the great secret of all successful work. The longest journey is a succession of steps, and the swiftest traveler can take only one at a time. The strongest chain is made up of separate links. If the workman has failed in the forging of one, the whole is easily

broken. The beautiful structure of a strong, well-balanced, symmetrical character is built out of individual acts of duty.

As a man thinketh in his heart, so is he. No one can count the millions of thoughts that make up the unwritten history of a single mind for a single day. And yet every one of these thoughts has something to do in making the man. The slightest stain left upon the surface of glass by the evaporation of a drop of turbid water is found to contain minute shells, perfectly formed and once inhabited by living creatures. The casual thought that disappears from the crystal surface of the mind as the dew-drop vanishes in the sun leaves behind a perfect impress of itself. If it was pure and good, the man is better for having cherished it only for an instant. The impress which it made will never be lost to the Infinite eye. The pulse of spiritual power which it gave will do something to make the man whole, just as every grain of sand is needed to build the shore and every drop of rain to fill the ocean.

He that is faithful in that which is least is faithful in much. It is a small thing to give a cup of cold water in the name of Christ. But whoever is faithful in things so small will be first to meet the demands of duty when the trial is great. The man who is first to speak a kind word to a friendless child, or to carry a look of sunshine into an afflicted and desolate home, will be first to make the great sacrifices of duty when the Master calls. The King in the final day will say,

"Come, ye blessed of my Father," to those who have only done the least and most common acts of kindness —to those who have only done what anybody can do any day of his life.

Depend on it, my friend, it is minute and conscientious attention to what the world calls little things that makes the great beauty and success of life. Little deeds of charity, little words of kindness, little acts of self-denial, little moments of diligence; a careful watch against little sins, a grateful use of little blessings, a wise improvement of little opportunities, a diligent cultivation of little talents, patient continuance in well-doing under little encouragement,—these things make men great in the sight of God; if these things be in you and abound, they will bring the knowledge and enjoyment of everything else.

To be willing to give thousands to the cause of Christ, you must be willing to give such as you have, be it ever so little. If you would compass the earth upon missions of charity and instruction, you must begin at your own door; you must show the spirit of Christ to those of your own household. If you would set up the kingdom of righteousness in all nations, you must first make one province of that kingdom in your own heart.

God's great work is perfect as a whole, because it is perfect in every part. He makes a leaf or a blade of grass with as much care as he makes a world. He polishes the scaly coat of the smallest insect as perfectly

as he feathers the wing of the cloud-cleaving eagle The soul of the little child that believes in Jesus is as precious in his sight as the burning seraph in the highest heaven. If you would be perfect, even as your Father in heaven is perfect, let all your work be done as unto him and in his sight. Be faithful in the least as well as in the greatest. Consider that anything worth doing at all is worth doing well. Learn to speak the little words of truth, to do the little deeds of kindness, to scatter the little gifts of love along the lowly pathways of life. And so, when your toil is done, your life-work shall bear fruit in heaven, and it shall be found precious before God.

God's Bow in the Cloud.

I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth; and I will look upon it, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between God and every living creature of all flesh that is upon the earth.—GEN. ix. 13, 16.

THE BOW IN THE CLOUDS

IX.

GOD'S BOW IN THE CLOUD.

GOD has chosen the most striking and beautiful objects in Nature for symbols of his truth and tokens of his covenant with man. He makes the symbol attractive, that it may draw our hearts to the truth which it represents. He makes the token beautiful, that we may look upon it the more gladly and remember the covenant which it calls to mind. In the familiar instructions of our Lord the beauty of the flowers and the happy song of the birds are appointed to charm away our worldly anxieties and to teach us the precious lesson of trust in Divine Providence for every want.

In the ancient prophets the everlasting mountains lift their rocky summits to the skies, and stand unchanged through the lapse of years, to teach us that God's kindness shall not depart nor the covenant of his peace be removed. The mighty river rolls its full and swelling tide through the long reach of land from the source to the sea, to teach us how deep and strong, and ever growing in depth and strength, shall be the peace of those who keep God's commandments. The

stars come forth in eternal beauty upon the plains of heaven, to show us the brightness with which the righteous shall shine in the kingdom of their Father. The oldest book of sacred history sets before us the same great promise written out as wide as the dome of the heavens and emblazoned with all the sevenfold colors of the showery arch. According to that inspired record, the bow in the cloud spans the pathway of the retiring storm, that we may look upon it as the sign and seal of the divine promise that the tempest of wrath shall be stayed from desolating the earth. God himself looks upon it and remembers the everlasting covenant between him and every living creature of all flesh.

We have no evidence that the laws of Nature were changed after the deluge. And yet it is possible that the family of Noah had never seen the bow in the cloud till they came forth from the ark. It is said in the previous record that a mist went up from the earth and watered the whole region called Eden, but as yet the Lord God had not caused it to rain. And if the soil of Paradise had been watered only by dew and by rivers that had their head in far-distant mountains, as is the case with Egypt to this day, then Noah and his sons, living in the land where the race began, might never have seen the bow in the cloud before the flood.

But when the fountains of the great deep were broken up and the sea rushed in upon the shore, the ark floated away from the rainless land of the patri-

arch's early home to the mountainous region of Ararat, and there the clouds gathered and the thunders rolled and the torrents of rain filled the air. And this was still so, after the miraculous and avenging tempest of the deluge had ceased. But when the fugitives from the flood saw the commotion in the elements and heard the roar of rushing torrents among the hills, they would begin to fear a return of the engulfing tide from the distant sea and another descent of crushing cataracts from the open windows of heaven. And to calm their rising fears, God spake to Noah and his sons, saying, "I do set my bow in the cloud, and it shall be for a token of a covenant between me and the earth. And it shall come to pass when I bring a cloud over the earth that the bow shall be seen in the cloud; and I will remember my covenant which is between me and you, and the waters shall no more become a flood to destroy all flesh. And I will look upon the bow in the cloud, that I may remember the everlasting covenant between me and every living creature."

And so when the thunder ceased and the clouds broke away around the setting sun, the patriarch and his family looked with wonder and with joy upon the sevenfold arch resting upon the earth and reaching to the heavens. And whenever afterward they saw the bow upon the cloud, they would say, God himself is looking upon that sign, and he sets it in the cloud as the seal of the covenant of peace between him and us.

Sometimes friends that are widely separated from

each other agree at a particular hour of the evening to look up to the same star, and it serves to strengthen and perpetuate the bond of friendship between them, that their attention is directed at the same moment to the same shining point in the sky. And so when we see the bow in the cloud we can think that God himself is looking at the same token of his covenant, and he will remember us in all our afflictions and perils, as he remembered Noah. Let the tempest rage and all earthly calamities sweep over us in resistless storm, still we can hope and rejoice if God will hang out his bow of promise and of peace upon the cloud, to show us that he is thinking of us and that our deliverance shall come in the fullness of time.

There is a peculiar tenderness and appropriateness in the condescension of the infinite Father when he says, "I will remember thee." He can never forget anything. And it is only because he remembers us every hour, and visits us with his mercies every moment, that life is a blessing. But we forget, and we think it a very hard thing to be forgotten. Life would have little left for us to desire if we thought that there were none to think of us with affection and gratitude. It is in condescension to this human infirmity of forgetfulness, and the intense and universal passion to be remembered, that the infinite Jehovah says to the fearful and longing heart, "I will not forget;" "I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands"—not simply written so as to be read with the eye, but

graven, that the inscription may be felt when it cannot be seen, and called to mind in the darkness as well as the light.

I have heard the sensitive and the warm-hearted say, upon the bed of death, that the great trial in dying is to pass away and be forgotten—the great world of the living going right on just the same without you as with you. Sometimes the departing spirit cannot go in peace upon its endless journey without receiving a sacred promise from some one among the living that a signet of love shall be worn, a memorial anniversary shall be kept, or a particular course of life shall be pursued, so as to bring the departed constantly to remembrance. And it adds immensely to the cheerfulness and fortitude with which any of us can meet the trials of life and the terrors of death if we have the assurance that the memorial of our names, written in gratitude and love upon the living tablets of another heart as frail and forgetful as our own, shall never be erased. Such is the constitution of the sensitive and yearning nature to which God has given the promise, "I will never forget thee." The world, by a universal verdict, declares it to be the hardest lot to lose all name and remembrance among the living—to die and give no sign.

I once visited an old German castle in the Grand Duchy of Baden. It stood on the slope of a mountain overlooking a wide and various landscape up and down the course of the storied and beautiful Rhine

The buttressed walls and loopholed towers and crenelated parapet, the broad stone staircase and the lofty apartments, were all as the hand of the builder left them six hundred years before. Down deep beneath the foundations of the castle was a dark-vaulted chamber excavated in the rock. Originally there was but one entrance to this chamber, and that was a long, narrow, perpendicular passage, descending from above like the flue of a furnace, without steps, ladder or staircase.

In that rock-hewn chamber met the terrible Vehmgericht, the mysterious council of vengeance in the Middle Ages. The accused, the judges and the witnesses descended to the court of death through the same passage. Every member of the tribunal was sworn, by an awful oath, to conceal its proceedings from "wife and child, father and mother, sister and brother, fire and wind, farm and village—from all that the sun shines and the rain falls upon—from all between heaven and earth." The accused, when brought before that court, did not know either judges or witnesses. All were dressed in black gowns, with a cowl that covered the face like a mask. If condemned, the wretched victim was ordered to walk along a narrow passage toward a door, which remains to this day, made of a single slab of stone, which still hangs upon its hinges, and which, when slowly turned, creaks upon its rocky threshold with a sound that pierces the heart as with a sword. An invisible hand swung the

door before the condemned man, and he saw a faint light, and beneath it an image of the Virgin Mary. He was told to kiss the image. In the act of doing so a trap-door was sprung beneath him, and he fell into a pit eighty feet deep, upon the points of revolving spears and knives that had been set there for his destruction.

If he was summoned, and did not deliver himself up to the secret court at the time and place appointed, he was condemned without trial; and thenceforth throughout Germany there were a hundred thousand secret ministers of vengeance sworn to put him to death. Not long afterward his body was sure to be found hanging to a tree, in sight of the public road, with a mystical dagger sticking in the trunk, to show that he had been killed by the secret tribunal. And nobody dared to name the victim, or ask a question about the cause of his death.

All who passed the rocky door of that dungeon court beneath the castle were called "*the forgotten.*" Neither father nor mother, brother nor sister, wife nor child might thenceforth mention their names. No badge of mourning could be worn by the bereaved, no funeral service could be celebrated, no public announcement might indicate their death. No tablet or tombstone could be reared to their memory. None dared to write or speak their names for fear of the vengeance of the mysterious and merciless council. And what made that tribunal so awful was the fact that, when they took the life of their victim, they blotted out his

name and his memorial from the earth. They suffered no tongue to tell his wrongs, no pen to write his history, no friend to inquire for his accusation, no advocate to plead his cause. He must be forgotten, and the world must be made to fear the vengeance of that secret court by the threat of that most awful doom—*forgetfulness.* And no tribunal or secret council has ever impressed the minds of men with such awful terror as that which so effectually took away all name and remembrance of its victim from the earth.

And when God sets his bow in the cloud as a memento of his covenant, when he tells us that he will look upon it that he may remember what he has promised, he appeals most affectingly to this involuntary and universal shrinking of the human heart from the dark and desolate doom of the forgotten. It is something to be remembered with grateful affection by a dumb brute. It is much to be remembered and kindly thought of by one poor human heart. It is more to be remembered and loved by many, though they are as frail and as easily afflicted as ourselves. But God is greater than all hearts. And nothing makes us feel our own greatness more than to find that he thinks of us with tender solicitude, and keeps a book of remembrance before him that he may never forget us.

Can the mother forget her infant child? Ask that mother, who parted from hers an hour ago, how many times since her heart has gone home to the snowy nest where the songless bird lies sleeping? Ask the mother

who saw the shadow of death come over the face of her child years ago, how many hours have passed since that day in which she has failed to think of that last bitter moment when the loved voice ceased, and the light in the gentle eyes went out, and she found herself bending over the dead? Who has not heard the sad story of the mother, with her husband and child, attempting to cross the Green Mountains in midwinter? Their progress was arrested by night and the storm. The husband went for help, but lost his way in the darkness and the drifted snow, and was long in returning. The mother felt the chill of death coming upon her, and she bared her bosom to the freezing blast and the falling snow, that she might give all that remained of her own life to save that of her child. And when the morning came, the living babe was found wrapped in the mother's shawl, vainly striving, with smiles and with a babe's pretty arts, to arrest the attention of her fixed and frozen eye, and wondering why she did not wake from her cold sleep.

So much stronger than death is the love that binds the mother's heart to her babe. And yet God says that the mother shall sooner forget her child than he will forget a single soul that trusts in him.

"Every human tie may perish
Friend to friend unfaithful prove;
Mothers cease their own to cherish,
Heaven and earth at last remove;
But no changes
Can attend Jehovah's love."

The bow never appears except on the cloud. It must have the dark background of the tempest on which to inscribe the glowing and beautiful covenant of peace. When the bright day bathes the whole earth with sunshine, there is no need of the bow, and it is not seen. The storm-cloud darkens the heavens, the thunder shakes the hills, the strong wind bends the forest and uproots the mighty oak, the rain descends in torrents, and the flooded streams threaten to overflow the fields and carry away the flocks. And then the bow comes out in serene and heavenly beauty, to show us that God has not forgotten his covenant of peace with the earth.

The world never looks so beautiful as it does when the summer shower is passing away, and the bow is set in the retiring cloud before the thunder ceases to be heard or the lightning to flash along the darkened sky. The most precious of all earthly blessings are those which are given in contrast with trouble and sorrow. We all need trial and conflict and darkness to make us look for the light and long for peace. We are never so thankful for an hour of sleep as when it comes after a night of wakefulness and pain. It is hunger that gives healthful appetite for food. It is toil that prepares for rest. It is conflict that prepares the longing soul for peace. If we had no shadows, we could have no sun. Perpetual day would be pain and madness. Perpetual night would be imprisonment and despair. When the cloud of trouble casts its gloom upon your

path, look up and you will see the bow of promise bending over you, bright with tears of pity and beautiful with all the hues of heaven. To all who look up for the token of God's covenant the darkest day is the prelude to an evening of gratitude and peace.

The great destiny of time and eternity turns upon obedience to the divine command, Look up, set your affections on things above, not on things on the earth. A little boy playing in the streets of Baltimore came to the foot of a long ladder and looked up. He heard the sound of hammers and the voices of workmen far up on the roof above him, and his childish curiosity impelled him to climb. He set his little foot on the lower round and his hand on the next, and then pulled himself up slowly, hand over hand, round after round, till he was so high that a fall would be instant death, and yet he had not reached the top. He grew tired, and wished he had not begun to climb. He looked down to see how far he had come, and the great height made him giddy. He began to tremble, and was fast losing his strength and his hold. Just then a man passing along the street at the foot of the ladder looked up, saw him terrified and trembling, and cried out, "My God! that boy is going to fall." The man meant no harm, but it was the worst thing he could say. His words and the frightened tone in which he spoke made the poor child much nearer falling than he was before. He grew more and more giddy. He thought the ladder swayed to and fro like trees bent by the storm. He

thought the house and the whole street were rocking like ships on the sea. But all at once he heard another voice, loud, cheery and full of courage, from the roof of the house above him—"Boy, look up!" He did look up; anybody would have done so, hearing such a hearty voice as that: "All right now. Come on." The boy was no longer giddy. He began to climb, and soon he reached the hand of the sensible carpenter on the roof, whose cheery word had saved him from being dashed in pieces on the pavement of the street.

That boy became a man of genius and culture. His written thoughts went all over America and stirred strong emotions in thousands of hearts. But to the day of his death he never ceased to attribute the preservation of his life and the accomplishment of all that he ever did in the world to the timely and encouraging words of the carpenter on the roof: "Look up. Come on."

There is many a weary climber standing trembling and fearful on the steep ladder of life; high enough up to make it fatal to fall, yet with much more climbing to do before he will reach a place of rest. He is discouraged and disheartened, and he hears somebody say, "He will never make anything—he will never succeed—he will certainly fall." And yet he only needs to hear the kindly and cheering voice which comes to him from above, saying, "Look up." There is a strong Helper bending down to take him by the

hand. If he will only look up and see that Face, he will climb till he reaches the heights of heaven.

This is the word which kind Heaven sends down to the tired and the tempted, to the discouraged and heartbroken, whether child or man—"Look up." This is the cheering, courageous command which rings through all the revelation of God to man—Look up. Heaven is above you, the pit is beneath. It is safe to climb. It is destruction to stop and look back. Oh, ye halting and weary, ye fearful and fainthearted climbers on the steep ladder of life, all above you is calm and steady when the earth reels and shakes beneath your feet. Look up and keep climbing, and you will soon see a divine hand reaching over the battlements of heaven to help you in. Ye giddy and thoughtless ones, who are carried round and round in the wild whirl of worldly excitement and vanity, look up. One longing, trusting gaze at the clear, calm heavens above will open to you more correct views of life, and will impart more strength and peace in the soul, than all the blinding and bewildering pleasures of earth ever gave.

The bow in the cloud never appears till the sun is more than half-way down the sky, and it is highest and brightest when the sun is nearest to the horizon. It is when we are getting discouraged and the opportunity for success seems to have passed from us, that the Divine promise comes: "I will never leave nor forsake you." In the high noon of prosperity and

proud success we are not apt to look upward for the sign of hope and divine protection. But when the hand grows weary and the heart faint; when the keepers of the house tremble and the strong bow themselves; when desire fails and fears are in the way; when trifles become a burden and the voices of music are brought low, and the sun of life is going down, then the bow of promise appears as the sign of hope. Then the afflicted and heartbroken have only to look up through eyes dimmed with tears to see the finger of God writing the covenant of peace on the cloud.

I love the sunshine, and my heart leaps with joy at the sight of the green fields and the waving forests and the glittering torrents singing among the hills. But I know that the storm must drift its darkness over the sky, and the thunder-cloud must roar through the air, and the sun of the summer's day must decline before the landscape can put on its resplendent beauty and the many-colored bow lift its archway of light for angels to pass from heaven to earth. And so evermore it is the decline of earthly hope that helps us look to the higher and better home. And we can afford to have all our worldly expectation cut off if such disappointment shall lead us to set our hearts upon the blessed land where the storm never drifts its darkness and the sun never goes down.

We can see the bow in the cloud only when standing with the back to the sun. The observer, who

would see the token on which God himself is looking in remembrance of his promised mercy, must turn his eye from the dazzling glories of the setting day and face the cloud and the coming night. It is when we turn the eye of faith away from all the splendor and beauty of earth that we behold the dawn of a more surpassing glory yet to be revealed. Heaven is very near; its golden gates are thrown wide open, and strains of its everlasting song are wafted forth to the dying Christian when his face is turned away from earth and his spirit is pluming itself for flight.

We should see more of heaven, we should have more of light and peace in our souls all along the pathway of life, if we looked less on the transient and deceptive splendor of earthly things, and fixed the eye of faith upon the veil of the future, where God writes his promise of the glory and the blessed life beyond. God sets his bow in the cloud to show us that the heavenly pervades and overarches and crowns the earthly. The token of his covenant rises in serene and glorious beauty above all the earthly homes of men, above the plains and the forests, above the hills and the mountains. It seems like a squadron of bright angels ranged in sevenfold ranks, and moving in silent and sublime array along the moving cloud, to show us how pre-eminent and blessed is the life of heaven above the life of earth.

God sets the token of his covenant high enough for all to see, and yet he brings it down to earth for all to

touch and embrace. He makes it bright and beautiful for all to admire. He is not afraid that the conditions of his offered mercy will be too large and free, or too inviting and attractive. He would have them rise above all the restrictions of sect and creed, condition and race. You have only to be a man, though the poorest and the worst, and he points you to the token of his covenant and bids you believe and be saved. He sends out the messengers of his mercy to run through all the earth, as free as the clouds fly and the rain falls and the sun shines, and every one is commissioned to say to men, Look up and behold the sign that God remembers you in mercy. and desires you to trust his word and be saved.

The great thing for you to believe is that God is not lying in wait to destroy you, but that he desires your welfare and is showering blessings upon you every moment. If you would please your heavenly Father, you have nothing to do but to accept his offered hand and walk with him through all the journey of life. He will lead you in a safe path, and he will make the desert smile for you at your approach.

God's covenant of mercy is with every living creature of all flesh. He sets the token of that covenant high enough for every eye to see, and he makes it beautiful enough for every heart to admire. To the fearful that token says, Be not afraid; to the wayward, Be not disobedient; to the careless, Look up and behold the sign and seal of God's care over you every

moment. When your homes are dark with affliction, look up and you will see God's bow in the cloud. In the very dispensation of Providence which seems so dark you can read the divine promise, I will never leave nor forsake you.

When the way of duty has become hard and wearisome, and you have forsaken it to enter some by-path of pleasure and self-indulgence, and it has brought you to sorrow and despair, you have only to turn back and you shall see the bow of promise shining with serene and heavenly beauty over the path of peace, and inviting you to return and resume the heavenward journey. When the world has taken possession of your heart, and you are living only for earth, look up and see God's bow of promise building a pathway of light, and inviting you to the city that hath everlasting foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God.

God's bow in the cloud is a seal that never grows dim with age or use. It is as bright to-day as when the patriarch saw it overarching the mountains of Ararat. Long as the cloud forms, and the rain falls, and the sun shines, that bow will be bright and new. So is it with God's covenant of mercy with man. It is as fresh and full of power to-day as it was when first sealed with the sacrificial blood of the cross. In eighteen hundred years of search and study and experiment, nothing has been found to satisfy the demands of the needy soul save the covenant of mercy, which is still proclaimed by the bow in the cloud and by the

blood of the cross. After all the inventions and discoveries of ages, the old way of salvation by mercy alone is still the newest, the safest and the best. The penitent sinner finds as free and full forgiveness in Christ to-day as did the dying malefactor who offered his first and last prayer on the cross: "Lord, remember me when thou comest into thy kingdom."

The appearance of the bow in the cloud depends upon the position in which the spectator stands. The cloud forms, the rain falls and the sun shines a hundred times in the year when no bow is seen. And let a thousand persons look at the same cloud and speak of the same sign, every one will see a separate bow. And so every heart has its own grief and its own joy. God's mercy is ever infinite and free. It depends upon ourselves whether we shall make the gift of that mercy our own. God's voice of love fills the world. We must give attention or we shall not think that he is speaking to us. When we listen to our Father's voice with a loving heart, we shall feel that his word is all for us. When the light of heaven falls upon the teardrops of earth, it makes the bow of peace. It is when we look up, through eyes dimmed with penitent tears, that the light of the Divine love clothes everything with beauty and makes everything a blessing. The deepest joy comes to those who have drank deepest of the cup of sorrow. The brighest path is the one upon which we go forth when leaving the prison-house of darkness and sin behind.

The higher one goes to look, the more complete is the bow which he sees in the cloud. When travelers climb to mountain-tops, they see, instead of a bow, a full circle of sevenfold rays on the cloud beneath. And so a time comes, in the largest and richest experience of faith, when the believer is lifted so far above all the clouds of doubt and fear and trouble that the token of God's promise to him is complete, the covenant of mercy is fulfilled. Like John in the heavenly vision, he sees, not a bow, but a full circle—an aureola of sevenfold glory round about the throne. His sins are all forgiven; his sorrows are all healed; his desires are all answered; the divine promises are all fulfilled. He has nothing more to ask. Christ is his, and God is all in all.

This blessed experience of assured faith may be short; it may come but once in a lifetime; it may be attained only after sore conflict with doubt and fear or sad exposure to the tempests and billows of affliction. It may be remembered, when past, as the traveler remembers the one hour of ecstasy which he spent on the top of the high mountain with all the splendors and glories of the earth beneath his feet. But the traveler never thinks it cost him too much climbing to enjoy that view only for once and for so short a time. And methinks that the beloved disciple welcomed the woes of exile with exceeding joy when he found that they opened for him a door in heaven and permitted him to behold the rainbow round about the throne. And

surely we can afford to climb the steepest mountains, to endure the sorest trials, to make the greatest efforts and sacrifices, to attain such a height of faith only for once and for an hour, as to see the bow of God's promises all complete and to make them all our own. That vision of beauty and of blessing once seen can never be effaced from the inner chamber of the soul until it is lost in the revealed splendors of that throne which is girt with the rainbow in heaven.

Consider the Lilies.

Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin; and yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.—MATT. vi. 28, 29.

X.

CONSIDER THE LILIES.

THE flowers of the field form the connecting link between living man and the lifeless earth. Flowers breathe and sleep like man, but they are mute like the earth. They move in graceful lines at the swaying of the wind, but they are rooted to the same spot of ground. They have the seductive charm of beauty, but not the dangerous fire of passion. They can receive the homage of admiration without vanity, and they can suffer the coldness of neglect without complaint. They win all hearts with the unstudied grace of simplicity, and they bestow their smiles with equal warmth upon all beholders. They bloom without pride and they fade without regret. They live without anxiety and they die without pain.

Our Lord sets the lilies to teach us the great lesson of trust in God. By common consent among men, flowers in general are chosen to express all the desires and dispositions of the human heart—the dark and wicked as well as the loving and good. They represent the constancy that turns to the object of affection like

the heliotrope to the sun, and the fickleness which is swayed like the wind-flower by the slightest breath of air. In the cypress they bewail disappointed hopes, and in the amaranth they teach the great lesson of immortality. The sensitive mimosa shrinks from the first breath of misfortune, and the hardy snowdrop defies the wintry blasts of adversity. The nightshade warns against the dark thoughts and evil suspicions of skepticism, and the star of Bethlehem bids us look heavenward for hope and consolation. The violet pledges unchanging love for the living, and the shivering leaves of the locust murmur in unabated sorrow for the dead.

And so, in our converse with the flowers, we find a representative for the pride that goes before a fall, and the humility which goes before honor; the ambition which seeks the cold and slippery heights of fame, and the modesty which prefers the calm retreat and the silent shade; the false tongue that wounds the innocent in malignity or in sport, and the purity of heart that shrinks from the thought of evil; the flaunting vanity which is enamored of its own beauty, and the modest virtue which blushes at the mention of its own worth.

So on all occasions and for all purposes flowers are set forth to express the human heart. They shade the fountain which refreshes with its cooling waters, and they wreathe the wine-cup which poisons with its maddening draught. They crown the conqueror who comes from the bloodstained fields of war, and they twine

the garlands that are borne by the messenger of peace. They outshine the costly robes in the mansions of the rich, and they creep up in their quiet beauty to adorn the cottage of the poor. They mingle in the mazes of the dance, they crown the festive-board, and they breathe forth the incense of perfume in the place of prayer. They adorn the youthful bride in the day of her beauty and joy, and they cheer the sad heart of the widow in her desolation and sorrow. They smile upon the sports of children playing in the sunshine, and they come with a message of rest and hope to weary-handed workmen who toil all day amid the clang of hammers and the groan of engines. They lend a charm to the quiet pleasures of home; they watch in the sad chamber of the sick and suffering; they go on errands of comfort and mercy to the afflicted; they bestow the last benediction on the silent face in the shroud; they come year by year, with unfailing constancy, to wreathe garlands around the lowly bed where the beloved have laid down to their last sleep.

Thus the flowers seem appointed to be our companions and comforters in all the changing scenes of life. And although man in blindness and depravity may use them for the adornment of his vices and the expression of his evil passions, the flowers themselves are all gentle and good. They came forth from Paradise with the purity which they had before the fall. They have traveled with man all over the earth, to show him how much he lost by sin, and how much may be regained

by repentance. And God has kept the love of flowers in the hearts of men to make it easy for them to receive divine lessons from such gentle and lovely teachers. God has made the worst of men susceptible to the gentle beauty of flowers, to convince them that in all their hardness and wickedness they still have capacities for good; in all their wanderings through the waste places of the world, the pure, the humble, the gentle flowers go with them to call them back to the lost Paradise.

Flowers are the silent music of nature, the embodied harmonies that are sung by the birds and sounded forth by the seas, murmured by the foliage of the wild forest and whispered in the rustle of the bearded grain. The sweet and wild melodies that find voice and utterance in the winds and waves are crystallized into forms of beauty in the gentle flowers. Those who have no ear for music and detect no harmonies in Nature may experience the same emotions of beauty which music is designed to awaken by contemplating the graceful form of the lily and the blushing hues of the rose. Music is the child of heaven, and the blessedness of the better land finds the fittest expression in everlasting song. The purest and loftiest emotions that the heart ever feels on earth are awakened by music, and the soul, in the favored hours of assured faith and perfect love, is wafted away to the mansions of rest upon waves of song.

And yet fallen man can make music a fallen angel

to excite the basest passions and to lead the unwary in the way to hell. So is it with flowers, the beautiful children of Paradise that received no stain from the sin of the fall. They may be woven into garlands to adorn the brow of the hero and the bosom of the harlot. They can be made to breathe their perfume upon the senseless orgies of the bacchanal and the passionate mazes of the dance. And yet the flowers themselves are pure. They are as much at home in the sanctuary as the sacred song and the solemn prayer. The holiest place on earth is made more like heaven by the presence of the flowers—the fair children of the light, the pitying angels that came forth with man from Eden to soothe the woes of exile and to win his heart back to the lost Paradise. If you would adorn and chasten the festivities of home with emblems of innocence and love; if you would cheer the dark hours of pain in the chamber of the sick with the sweetest expression of gratitude and trust; if you would consecrate the Lord's altar with offerings of purity from his own most glorious work; if you would beautify the resting-place of the dead with the most expressive symbols of life and immortality,—you can choose nothing better than flowers.

The Bible was not written to teach any branch of natural science, and yet it names one hundred and thirty-six different kinds of plants. There are more than three hundred passages of Scripture in which the inspired writers draw lessons for the instruction of man

from the flowers of the field. Our Lord himself, in one of the most tender and solemn portions of the Sermon on the Mount, turned the attention of the listening multitude to the beautiful emblems of trust that were in sight of every eye when he said, "Consider the lilies." We should manifest a very different spirit from holy men of old, who spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, if we should refuse to make a sacred study of the flowers of the field.

Consider first the most obvious and commonly observed characteristic of the flowers — their beauty. No art of man has been able to combine symmetry with variety of form, depth with delicacy of hue, as every eye can see them in the flowers. God has made everything beautiful in its time and place. And no man can find out the work of God unto perfection, because every minutest thing which he has made is the perfection of beauty in design and adaptation. One would need to comprehend the whole infinite order and frame of things in existence to know how perfectly every individual thing which God has made fills its place and displays the highest beauty of plan and execution. Nothing in the universe, when fully understood, is deformed or out of place—nothing mars the beauty of God's perfect work. The whole creation, as it came from the hands of the Divine Builder, is a *cosmos*—that is to say, an adornment, a harmonious and fitting order of things. And this perfect work of God will give interest and pleasure to all pure, rever

ent, well-ordered minds the more it is studied, the better it is understood.

At first glance, the bald and splintered peak of the granite mountain seems like a scar upon the sky, a diseased and deformed protuberance on the earth. And yet the golden-tinted clouds and the silent heavens above, and the wooded slopes and the grassy vales beneath, would lose half their charm were that rugged mass of rocky desolation removed. The cometary orb, which suddenly blazes forth from the solitudes of infinite space, and having done the errand of its mysterious destiny disappears to return no more, seems as if it were a wandering discord upon the peaceful plains of heaven. But if it has no other use, it can at least teach us by contrast the stability of the heavens, which were of old by the word of God, and which through successive centuries have had no change.

God has adapted everything, the least and the greatest, to the place which it is appointed to fill in the harmonious arrangement of things. Nothing stands alone. Unity and variety, contrast and correspondence, are balanced and blended through all Nature to secure the perfect and universal harmony. There is such completeness in number, in form, in organization, that to know the half is to know the whole. The bird has its two wings, the body its two arms, the head its two eyes, and we cannot even think of varying these parts by more or less without shuddering at the contemplation of disease and deformity.

Life has its two states, sleeping and waking; time has its two divisions, day and night; motion and magnetism have their two forces, attraction and repulsion; all organized bodies have two tendencies, growth and decay; sensibility has its two states, enjoyment and suffering; the will has its two choices, right and wrong; the soul has its two destinies, life and death.

The mind and the external world are so adapted to each other that these correspondences in state, number, force and experience are always expected. If not apparent, they are sought for, and if they are not found there is a painful sense of unfitness and deformity. The first effort of the human designer in all his works of taste and imitative art is to satisfy the original universal demand for uniformity. It is the severest test of skill in the sculptor to make one side of the human face correspond to the other in the marble statue. Not unfrequently in architectural structures the first effect of a door, a window, a column, an arch upon the beholder is to set his mind upon the search for another to correspond. And if it is wanting, the whole work is pronounced an offence to the feelings and a libel upon Nature.

God in the creation so invariably adapts one thing to another, and everything to its place, that a part is enough to teach us the nature and use of the whole. The five fingers of the one hand satisfy the mind without inquiry that the other must have the same number. Our faith in the unchanging order of these correspond-

ences is as fixed as our faith in our own existence. We believe, whether we can see it with our own observation or not, that there is an essential fitness of order and adaptation which God never violates in the infinitude of his works. We can conceive that he may make other worlds very different in many respects from this, but we cannot conceive that he would make any wherein the beauty of order and proportion manifest here would be wanting. Let our existence be continued ever so long, and our faculties for study and observation be cultivated ever so high, we should continue to find in all of God's works the same infinite and everlasting order, fitness, adaptation which realizes our highest conception of beauty, and warrants the original decision of the one creative Mind, "All is very good."

Now this divine beauty of order and correspondence, the love of which is an instinctive and universal passion, can be far more easily seen in the flowers than in any other portion of the natural world. We need no cultivation in science, no peculiar susceptibilities of taste, to perceive the unity and variety, the contrasts and correspondences of light and shade, form and number, growth and decay in the flower. Everybody sees and everybody says that they are beautiful. Everybody knows and everybody feels that God made them to give pleasure by their beauty. The little child needs no instruction from books or teachers to look with delight upon the delicate hues and the graceful forms of the rose and the lily.

All quiet, pure-hearted people, who are child-like in their fitness for the kingdom of heaven, are fond of flowers. All refined and devout men, whose souls have drank deep from the eternal harmonies of God's kingdom, feel that they are very near their Father's hand when they consider the glory with which he clothes the flower of the field. The poor, the lowly, the uneducated adorn their homes with the loveliness and the beauty which the Divine Artist pours as free as the sunshine on the humblest flowers. Hard-working men and women, in whose hearts is the covenant of peace, though shut up in close garrets and crowded streets and noisy manufactories, hang a little vine or shrub in the window, and they watch its opening blossoms as if they saw in their delicate tints lingering rays of the Paradise once lost, and foregleams of a brighter Paradise yet to be regained.

Devout, spiritual, religious minds, that care nothing about the flaunting colors of fashion or the elaborate decorations of art, delight in contemplating the quiet and simple beauty of flowers. The shrinking and sensitive student finds nothing in all the riches and splendors of literature to cheer his heart so much as one view of the wild landscape in the opening spring, when trees wave their green boughs and flowers swing their censers of perfume in the wind, and the humble grass clothes the field in more seemly robes than kings ever wore.

When the Christian traveler in the Holy Land

would bring home the most fitting memorial of the sacred scenes which he has visited, he plucks a rose on the plain of Sharon; he gathers a bunch of thorns from the sowers' field in sight of the Sea of Galilee; with tearful eyes and a trembling hand he takes a lily from the Mount of the Beatitudes; he breaks a twig of terebinth from the groves of Tabor; he turns aside to select a withered fig leaf as he threads the sacred path from Bethany to Jerusalem; he bows his head as if pressed with a crushing burden, and his mind is stirred with thoughts too deep for tears, as he takes an olive leaf from the garden of Gethsemane. And when, in after years, his eye falls upon the leaves and flowers which he gathered with his own hand beside the paths where the feet of Jesus trod, he feels that no work of art could so effectually and lovingly draw him to the scenes where Jesus suffered and the throne where Jesus reigns.

God has strewn the flowers in profusion all over the earth, and he has given them infinite variety in form and hue, that every taste may be gratified, and that none may be wearied with the study of their beauty. He thus shows us how much he himself delights in the perfection of beauty, and how much instruction, refinement and happiness may be derived from the contemplation of his marvelous works. Millions of flowers are indeed born to blush unseen by man, but they never waste their sweetness on the desert air. God sees them and delights in their beauty. They offer up the incense of silent worship to Him that made them. The

Lord ever rejoices in the work which he has clothed with such a profusion of beauty. His glory is declared not only by the heavens and all the host of them, but by the primrose stars in the springing grass, by snow-plants that bloom on the edge of eternal ice, and by the delicate moss that lives where the foot of man never trod.

It becomes us to consider the lily and the humblest flower that grows with a feeling of reverence and of worship, for it is itself a thought, a plan of God. Its beauty is an expression of the infinite Mind, just as truly as the most sacred precept in the book of divine revelation. The two hundred thousand species of flowers that adorn the earth and preserve their individual character from century to century, were all designed and shaped and colored with infinite variety and beauty by the Divine Artist who laid the foundations of the earth and unrolled the firmament of stars with his own hand. He delights in the beauty of the microscopic moss that climbs the mountain-side eighteen thousand feet above the sea or travels northward to the circle of perpetual ice, not less than in the most brilliant flowers that blaze in the palm groves of the Tropics.

If we would show ourselves to be God's children, we must learn to delight in the pure, simple, quiet beauty with which our Father adorns the home of his earthly children. Our Lord tells us that the most magnificent of all the kings of Israel could not come forth in

such gorgeous array as that with which God clothes the humble flower of the field. And God will bring this more than kingly glory into the house of any one who will plant a seed in a handful of earth and set it in the window for the light to look upon.

There is nothing in the paintings of the grea masters, nothing in statuary, nothing in the most costly and elaborate decorations of architecture, to be compared with the simple grace, the delicate tints, the perfect harmony of a flower which the poorest can cultivate in the humblest home. Let not your heart be led away, then, with longing for the artificial splendors which riches alone can buy. You can look upon and enjoy God's perfect beauty every day in some delicate flower reared by your own hand and set in your own window. If the Divine Teacher himself should come to your house and hear your sighings for the costly adornments of paintings and statuary and furniture and dress, he would point to the rose, or the geranium, or the hyacinth, if he could find one there, and thus rebuke your discontent: I say unto you that all the glories of art and all the works of human hands could not adorn your home with such beauty as God has given to this little flower, which is all your own and whose cultivation is a daily delight.

And while our Saviour's words teach us to look upon the flowers with something like reverent and religious affection, we should learn from them to cultivate in ourselves the quiet grace and simplicity which belong

to the children of God. The frail and delicate beauty which blooms only to fade should awaken in us ardent desires for the everlasting beauty of holiness. The ornament of a meek and quiet spirit is in the sight of God of great price. It is indeed more precious than all things that genius can create or riches can buy. Of all things that are sought and cherished and cultivated in this world, there is nothing so beautiful in God's just estimate as a pure heart. There is nothing so like heaven as a disposition ever tuned, amid all the discord of the world, to the divine harmony of truth and love. The most studious attention to all the outward proprieties and courtesies of life is not so effectual a safeguard in keeping one from all that is misjudged and unbecoming in speech and conduct as the spirit of genuine benevolence in the heart. All beauty and grace, all propriety and comeliness of deportment, find a full and fitting expression in love. Love clothes the face with light, mellows the voice with music, lends the charm of inimitable grace to everything said and done in its spirit. It is itself so pure, excellent and divine in its own essential character as to keep the heart in which it reigns in harmony with the highest reason and the perfection of beauty. Man comes nearest to God by possessing God's greatest attribute, love. Love is the beauty of Him who is fairer than all the children of men. It is the beauty which he most desires in those who would be like him in blessedness and glory. When the heart is made a garden for the

culture of all meekness and gentleness and love, the lost beauty of Paradise is restored, and the everlasting beauty of heaven is begun on earth.

The flowers of the field teach us most affectingly the frailty of our mortal state. Everything that blooms in the whole kingdom of nature lives only to die. The fairest are the frailest, and the most beautiful die first. The glow of life carnationed upon the blushing leaf of the rose fades while you speak of its beauty. And the same hue upon the cheek of the sleeping child is as certain, if not as soon, to fade. There are indeed some forms of vegetation whose life continues for centuries. The olive trees now standing in the garden of Gethsemane are thought by some to be the same trees beneath whose shade Christ bowed himself in agony. There are trees now standing in our own country whose boughs were green when Abraham entertained angels beneath the branching oak of Mamre. And yet the leaves and the flowers upon the oldest of the patriarchs of the wilderness come forth only to fade and fall. Year by year they teach man the solemn lesson of his own mortality.

Would you know what will soon become of that living frame which you now guard and cherish and adorn with constant care? Look at the blossoms which the spring brings forth in its beauty. When another spring comes, they will be changed to the dust of the earth, and men will tread upon them without thinking that they were once alive. It may be even in less time

than a year that God will fulfill upon your living and sensitive frame the sentence pronounced of old upon the whole race: "Dust thou art, and unto dust thou shalt return." The living will walk over your lowly bed without thinking or knowing what form or expression once belonged to the dust that rests beneath their feet. Let the frail beauty of the humble flower create in you irrepressible longings for the everlasting beauty of holiness. Then, when the deathless soul is sent forth from its perishable habitation, it shall be transplanted to

> "Those everlasting gardens,
> Where angels walk, and seraphs are the wardens:
> Where every flower, brought safe through death's dark portal,
> Becomes immortal."

The flowers teach us the great lesson of trust in God. It was to bring this lesson home to our hearts in the most practical form that our Lord said, "Consider the lilies." These silent and beautiful preachers on divine providence love the open air. They deliver millions of faultless sermons in the bright sunshine of every spring day, on the grassy hillsides and in the green valleys. They are clothed in brighter robes than princes wear. Like the Divine Preacher on the Mount of the Beatitudes, they have the earth for a pulpit and the blue sky for the ceiling of their sanctuary. The quiet brooks and the happy birds and the murmuring winds sing for them. It makes no difference with them whether anybody praises or finds fault with their

preaching. Their prayers are perfumes of sweet incense unto God. Their voices are graceful forms and delicate hues blended in perfect harmony. Their appeals are as quiet as the ripple on the sleeping sea. Their rebukes fall as gently as the sunbeam falls on the winter snow.

And these beautiful flowers, these bright children of the sun, all preach the same sermon which Christ interpreted for the multitudes on the Mount of the Beatitudes, and that is trust in God, a cheerful and happy acquiescence with your Father's will—whatever he gives, whatever he takes away. The beautiful preachers in the gardens and the fields say to us, "God careth for us whose life is less than a season. Will he not much more care for you whose years, like his own, are eternal? God weaves the robe of inimitable beauty for us who perish in a day. Will not your heavenly Father bring forth still better robes for you, who must live when the earth is burned up and the heavens are removed like a parched scroll?"

Anxiety is the bane of human happiness, and the blessed flowers come every year with the same bright and cheery hues to tell us God has not forsaken the world. He makes them just as beautiful now as they were in Paradise, to show us that his loving-kindness changes not. Man was banished from Paradise because he dishonored the fruit of its flowers. And yet the flowers in pity came forth to cheer the exile in his wanderings, and to remind him that God's love is with

him everywhere to draw him back to his lost home. And to this day, while the earth still groans under the curse of man's sin, the thistle wears a beautiful blossom and the thorn is crowned with the rose.

So God always mingles blessing with chastisement. So he sends some beams of heaven's light into the saddest home. The one thing needed to make us contented in any lot is the belief that God has not forsaken us nor will forsake us. And Jesus teaches us to draw this faith from the lilies of the field. It is not slighting or dishonoring God's book to obey Christ's word, "Consider the lilies." When your home seems dark, and you cannot read the blessed promises in God's word because your eyes are blinded with tears, turn to the first flower you can find in the garden or by the roadside—the simplest is the best. Look upon it as it opens its buds to welcome the morning, and say in your sad heart, "O thou silent preacher of trust in Divine Providence, teach me to rejoice as much in the light of God's countenance as thou rejoicest in the light of the sun." And then do not be afraid to believe that He who brings up the humble flower from the cold, dead earth and opens its beauty to the sun, will bring you forth with joy from the saddest hour, and change the night of sorrow and trouble into the full day of hope and gladness.

We all know the story of the sermon preached to Mungo Park by the little flower in the desert. He had been robbed by savages and left to perish in the

wilderness of Central Africa. Without food or clothing, five hundred miles from any European settlement, surrounded by savage beasts and men more savage, he was filled with amazement and terror. He saw nothing left him but to lie down in the desert and die. Just then his attention was drawn to the extraordinary beauty of a delicate little flower, no larger than the end of one's finger, blooming by his side. And he said to himself, "Can that great Being who planted, watered and brought to perfection this small flower in this obscure part of the world, look with unconcern upon the condition and sufferings of one made in his own image and destined to live for ever?" The simple thought saved the brave and strong-hearted man from despair. He started up and pressed on, assured that help was at hand. And he was not disappointed. He was saved by the sermon upon trust in Divine Providence preached to him by that small flower in the desert.

There are times when the journey of life seems to us like that which Park was pursuing alone in the wilds of a strange land. The feeling of discouragement steals over us in spite of all our resolutions to resist and shake it off. It casts a shadow upon every prospect, and lays a heavy burden upon shoulders that are already weary. It makes us dissatisfied with everything that we ever have done, and it persuades us to believe that we shall never do any better in the future. It tells us that life is a conflict, in which success gives

no satisfaction and the mortification of defeat has no alleviation. It makes the strong man weak, and the courageous a coward. Under its depressing influences the hopeful despond, the patient complain and the believing are faithless. All great, strong, sensitive souls know what it is to wrestle with this terrible demon of despondency. And in the blind and baffling conflict they have often drawn strength and victory from sources as humble as the flowering moss that preached to Park in the wilderness.

And God has sent out the flowers as missionaries of hope and blessing all over the earth. He has appointed ten thousand trifling incidents in our daily life to preach to us the great lesson of trust in him. And when we are ready to sink in despair, we have only to heed these silent and gentle preachers, and we shall receive strength and faith to take up our burden and resume our march, assured that He who clothes the lilies of the field with glory, and feeds the fowls of the air when they cry, will not forget to make better provision for his own children.

The Fowls of the Air.

Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?—MATT. vi. 26.

XI.

THE FOWLS OF THE AIR.

A HARD study is sometimes made easy and inviting by having an agreeable teacher. Our Lord gives us this advantage for our profit when he puts us under the tuition of the fowls of the air, to learn the hard lesson of faith in God when earthly hopes fail, and freedom from anxiety when earthly cares abound. Of all the living tribes that God has made subject to man for his support and instruction, birds are the most attractive, the most interesting and the most beautiful. Birds are to the animal creation what flowers are to the vegetable world; what precious stones are to the golden crown; what the finished capital is to the fluted column; what the brilliant rainbow is to the blackened cloud; what the purple dawn is to the starry night and the shining day —a superadded ornament, an efflorescence of beauty and delight, a final touch of the creative Hand, giving the charm of exuberant grace to the work that was perfect before. In order that creation should be complete, it was not necessary that the flowers should breathe perfume, and the birds should warble melodies, and the

bow of beauty should span the cloud, and the morning should come forth "arrayed in gold imperial." God has enriched our earthly home with all these excellences of beauty that every faculty of our being might have full employment in finding out his perfect work, and that our cup of blessing might run over.

Whether we regard the graceful forms of the feathered tribes, their delicate and brilliant plumage, their swift and varied motions, or their happy voices, we shall find much to behold with admiration and to study with delight. They move with so much ease and rapidity in all directions through the invisible air that they remind us of spiritual beings, and they seem to belong to the heavens rather than the earth. The Divine Teacher himself calls them fowls of heaven, and they are often so named elsewhere in the Sacred Scriptures. The Psalmist, when overwhelmed with earthly afflictions and sorrows, poured out his heart in longing for the freedom and buoyancy which belong to the winged inhabitants of the air: "Oh that I had wings like a dove! for then would I fly away and be at rest." When the prophet was instructed to promise the greatest possible blessing to those that wait on the Lord, he said, "They shall mount up on wings as eagles."

The life of the birds is well chosen in the Scriptures as a symbol of exemption from earthly care and affliction. They come and go with the summer and the flowers. They return in the spring with songs of

gladness, and they depart in autumn with the happy voices of pilgrims starting upon a pleasant journey. It is home with them here while they stay, and they are drawn not the less by the attractions of home when they go. When the winds grow sharp and the frosts change the garments of the forests and fields to mourning, the light-hearted birds have nothing to do but spread their joyous wings and seek a more genial clime.

So lives the cheerful, trusting child of God who has learned to lay all his care upon an infinite Helper and be at peace. He has two homes—one here and one far away. While the season of work and duty lasts, he is happy to stay in this; and when God's good time comes, he is still happy to go. He is content to toil on and bear the heat and burden of the day while strength is given him to toil. And when the winter of age or infirmity comes, and the chill of death invades this earthly tabernacle, and the frail garment of mortality can no longer shelter the soul, then on joyous wing

> "The ransomed spirit to her home,
> The clime of cloudless beauty, flies;
> No more on stormy seas to roam,
> She hails her haven in the skies."

Of all the animal tribes the birds alone have musical voices, and they only are susceptible to the power of music. To this day we may stand on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, where our Lord went forth to teach the multitude in the light of the early morning, and we

can hear the note of the lark rising, silvery and joyous, higher and higher, as if the tireless singer were ambitious to carry the song of praise to the very gates of heaven. And while we listen, entranced with the rising melody, the whole sky will become vocal with invisible choristers, as if winged seraphs had come down to join the happy birds in singing praises to Him who brings the day.

Birds sing in the morning to remind us of our duty and our privilege to present a grateful and holy offering to Him who has kept us in the night, and who alone can guard us in the day. Birds sing when the sun goes down to turn our thoughts to Him whose mercies are new every morning and fresh every night. Birds sing in the close prison of the cage as well as in the wild freedom of the forest, to teach us that in the lowliest home and in the most distressed condition we may yet pour out our hearts in praise—we may find abundant reasons for gratitude to God. Birds sing when suffering pain and when pining with homesickness and solitude, to teach us, with the martyr's faith and the victor's joy, to lift up our hymn of triumph from the unsounded depths of human woe. Birds sing when cruel hands have put out their eyes and left them nothing but a life of darkness, that we may learn in the darkest day and the deepest grief still to go singing on our way to the land of light and realm of glory.

When one bird sings, all that are within hearing will

break forth into song. And thus the happy choristers set to music the sacred charge enjoined upon our hearts to weep with those that weep and rejoice with those that rejoice. Their voices are full of feeling, and they are quick to catch the feeling which any voice conveys. They call to each other with tones which express their longing for the society of friends. They woo their mates with the soft and tender strains of love. They alarm each other with the shrill and startling cry which warns of coming danger. They shout in the fierce accents of defiance when the spoiler attacks the innocent and helpless. They moan in the bitter and heartbreaking measures of inconsolable sorrow when their nests are robbed by the spoiler and their little ones are sold into bondage. They call their young in such accents of affection as the child loves to hear in the mother's voice. They put on the aspect of mourning, and they manifest a sincere and unostentatious grief when their beloved companions are taken away by death.

These things, which birds have in common with man, make them peculiarly fit to teach us the great lesson of freedom from worldly care and faith in our common Father in heaven. They begin and close the day with song, and spend their life in music and gladness, to teach us that we can always find something to make us sing and rejoice, if only we trust our Father's word and keep a grateful heart. The birds, with all their quick and passionate and tender sensibilities, with all their exposure to want and pain and wrong, are set

before us by the Divine Master to teach us the great lesson of contentment with the day and trust for the morrow.

Birds live in all sorts of ways, and they become attached to all sorts of homes. It is easy to learn from them how little difference it makes where we are or what homes we live in, provided we depend on our Father's care, and our souls are ready at any time to wing their flight to our Father's house. Birds build their nests in the trunks of decayed trees and on the green branches that swing in the storm. They sleep in the clefts of the rocks and under the coping of the ivy-mantled tower. They make a home for their brood in the waving grass of the meadow and on the bare cliffs of the mountain—in the tangled thicket of the forest and on the naked sand of the desert. And God keeps the house of the secure and trustful builders with equal care—whether it be the eagle's, on the cold crag amid clouds and tempests, or the humming bird's, hanging on the end of a twig in some sheltered grove of the green valley.

And so the birds teach us to trust the keeping of our homes, without fear or anxiety, to Him who never slumbers nor sleeps, assured that no plague can come nigh our dwelling and no calamity can befall our families against the will of our Father. The home is safe when God keeps it. He who guards the nest of the unfledged bird will not forget the cradle of the little ones, whose angels do always behold his face in heaven. The

lowliest cottage and the meanest apartment with God's blessing are better than thrones and palaces without it.

Birds travel in all sorts of ways. They go in flocks and alone. They fly high in the air and they skim close to the ground. They soar above the clouds and they walk in the dust; they swim on the water, and they wade beneath the surface of the sea. They float with motionless wings in the air, like ships becalmed on the ocean; they sport at graceful ease, and they outstrip the tempest in flight. They gather their food on the wing, and they seek it in the mire and filth of the earth. They sip the honey of the opening flower and they taste the fresh fruit on the tree. They accept the food which everything else rejects, and they rejoice in abundance when everything else wants. So our heavenly Father feedeth them, and they are contented to live and fly and sing for gladness just as he has appointed. They ascend the heavens without pride and they walk in the dust without shame. They trim their plumes with the greatest care where there are none to praise their beauty, and they sing their sweetest note with equal joy in the mansion of the rich or at the cottage door.

And so the free and happy birds would teach us to be content to do our Father's will, whether we pursue the journey of life in carriages of ease or walk with a pilgrim's staff. The dazzling equipage which flashes its splendors on the street in passing can carry nothing more precious than the human soul. And that treasure

is stored in the bosom of him who wears the meanest garb and pursues the lowliest occupation. Let the immortal spirit hold high converse with God and keep its wings plumed for flight to its heavenly home, and it will not suffer much anxiety about the mode in which the journey of this earthly life must be pursued. If we can see Jesus and the hosts of the blessed waiting to receive us at the end of our journey, it will not trouble us much if we have to pursue a very humble path and live upon very simple fare on the way.

And we may learn the same lesson of faith and contentment from the brilliant robes worn by the fowls of the air. All the artists in the world could not equal the delicacy of structure and beauty of coloring which God has given to the goodly feathers of the peacock and the ostrich, and which fall in silvery light around the neck of the dove. Take a single plume from the golden pheasant or the bird of paradise, and examine the minutest thread and filament of the structure with the microscope, and it will only appear the more wonderful for lightness and grace the more it is studied. When these bright and joyous creatures are seen by the naturalist in their native home, floating and flashing like meteors through the forest, he stands amazed and silent, as if he had seen a vision of heavenly beauty. Although he has traveled half round the globe to secure the treasure, when he sees the bird which is fitly named from Paradise in the wild freedom of Eastern climes, he feels as if it would be something like

sacrilege to aim the deadly shot at a living creature on whose dazzling plumes the Divine Hand has poured all stars and gems in sparkling showers.

And if God clothes the birds of the air with robes of such brilliant hues and such elaborate workmanship, will he not provide garments of immortal splendor for the soul that longs for purity and dreads nothing so much as the dishonor and defilement of sin? If God makes the birds so beautiful that we may behold them with delight, may we not trust without an anxious thought that the bounties of his providence will answer all our wants?

And it is not alone the rare and resplendent inhabitants of tropical groves and distant lands that are worthy to receive our most devout and admiring attention. The plain and common birds that may be seen on any summer's day in the open country or in city parks, the multitudes that the traveler still finds among the hills of Galilee and on the waters of the lake where our Saviour taught, may still teach us the lessons of divine wisdom. They rise on the wing; they wake the morning with their song; they burnish their plumes in the sun; they build their nest among the branches; they dart in waving lines and they float in graceful circles in the air; they gather their food by the wayside; they come and go with the seasons; they make their life a holiday of joy and song, just as they did when our Lord pointed to the singing and soaring flocks around him as he spoke in the open

fields to the multitude and said, "Behold the fowls of the air."

God has made them all subject to man. Their varied plumes, their peculiar notes, their habits and instincts and modes of living, have all been given them by our heavenly Father to make them instructive and profitable to us. And we can easily group together some of the sacred lessons which they are appointed to teach if we observe the fowls of the air which are most frequently named in the Scriptures.

Of all the birds of the Bible, the dove is the most sacred. It is everywhere the symbol of meekness, of innocence and love. Its gentle voice, its graceful motions, its fidelity to its mates, its spotless purity, its fondness for home and the dwellings of man, its artless simplicity and its love of peace, make it a fit representative of holy dispositions and heavenly rest.

When the waters of the Deluge were assuaged and the ark rested on the mountains, Noah sent forth a dove as a messenger of peace and reconciliation between man and the avenging flood. And when the winged herald came back from her long flight, bringing a green olive leaf plucked fresh from the branch, Noah understood the sign that the Divine Voice had stilled the angry tempests, and the forfeited inheritance of earth should be given back to man for his possession.

So when our souls have been beaten and tossed, like Noah's ark, for many days by the tempests of affliction and sorrow, when the heavens of our hopes have been

darkened by thick clouds, and all our beautiful things of earth have been swept from us by the billows of disaster, then the spirit of divine consolation comes, in semblance like Noah's dove, with the message of peace and reconciliation. Then light breaks upon the darkness, the clouds are scattered from the face of the sky, a heavenly calm steals in upon our hearts, and we breathe forth the grateful song:

> "Oh who could bear life's stormy doom,
> Did not thy wing of love
> Come brightly wafting through the gloom
> Our peace-branch from above?"

We have only to trust and wait in the time of our greatest trial, and God will set his bow of promise in the cloud, and when the tempest is past, renew with us, as he did with Noah, the covenant of everlasting peace. God has promised that the least of his people shall be more glorious than the kings of the earth, and their robes shall be as the wings of a dove covered with silver and burnished with gold.

When our Lord went up from the baptism of Jordan, and the heavens were opened unto him to declare his divine commission for the conquest of the world, the spirit of wisdom and of power, of meekness and of love, descended upon him in the likeness of a dove. He sent forth his own disciples to meet and overcome all the powers and terrors of the earth with the innocence and gentleness of the dove. And so evermore it is by gentleness that God makes his people great.

By innocence and purity alone can they acquire the dominion of the world. The inheritance of the earth is promised to the meek.

The sparrow named in the Scriptures is a busy, noisy little bird, that flutters and twitters around dilapidated walls in the city and beside all the highways and foot-paths in the Holy Land. It is so tame and fearless that it will scarcely move out of the way for the traveler. It builds its nest on the battlements and in the windows of houses, under the very eye and within reach of the hands of the inhabitants. It is so common and so small that a dead sparrow in the path would be as little noticed as an insect or a worm. And yet to all readers of the words of Jesus every motion and twitter of these busy little birds preaches a sermon upon God's providential care. Not one of them can fall to the ground without our Father. The pain with which the sparrow dies may be less than many of us suffer every hour. And yet that pain touches the heart of infinite love. If God thinks of us so kindly and so constantly, shall we not think of him with thankfulness and trust? If the death of the sparrow be an event worthy to receive the attention of the infinite God, how much more must he care for the life and the happiness of beings that must enjoy or suffer for ever! If our Father feeds the little bird while it lives, and feels for it when it dies, can we not trust him still, even when our fearful and fainting hearts are ready to burst forth in the bitter cry of the cross, My

God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? There is no way in which we wrong our heavenly Father more than by giving ourselves up to ungrateful complaints and unnecessary anxieties, and forgetting that He who feedeth the young ravens when they cry has promised that there should be no want to them that fear him.

The fowls of the air teach us to regard the lessons of Divine Providence in the seasons of the year and the changing periods of life. There is a striking passage in the prophet Jeremiah to this effect: "The stork in the heaven knoweth her appointed times; and the turtle and the crane and the swallow observe the time of their coming." The winter finds the stork far away among the highlands of Ethiopia. When the appointed day comes, as if moved by a divine inspiration, she spreads her wings for her long flight. A thousand miles down the Valley of the Nile, a thousand more across the whole breadth of the Mediterranean Sea, and on still over Alps and Apennines, over sunny vineyards and snowy mountains to Holland and Denmark, and over the Baltic to Sweden and Norway, the stork pursues her aerial journey till she finds the same old tower and rebuilds the nest of the former year. And the bird would sooner die than shorten the journey or fail to start at the appointed time. No matter what storms may darken the air, or what sunny climes may invite her to rest on the way, she goes, guided by a mysterious and divine instinct, straight to her old home, and never rests till there.

And the inspired prophet tells us that the punctuality of the migratory bird may well teach us to regard the times of God's gracious visitation. The perseverance, the undeviating constancy with which the aerial voyager pursues her long journey through storm and sunshine till she reaches her destination, may well stimulate us to press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling. We all have a home of cloudless beauty—a land of serene and joyful rest to seek. To our feeble faith it seems far away, and it can be reached only through clouds and storms. But the inspiration of the Almighty has awakened within us a longing for such a home, just as truly as a divine, God-given instinct impels the stork and the dove, the crane and the swallow, to observe their appointed times and start upon their long journeys. If they should resist the mysterious impulse to go, and should stay until they died upon their frozen nests in the cold north, or they perished with equal certainty of excessive heat in the south, they would not be acting more in opposition to the demands of their nature than does the soul that clings to earth and neglects the divine admonition to be in constant readiness to spread its wings and fly to a better land.

The instructions of God's word and the dealings of Divine Providence with us, from day to day, are all appointed to teach us that we cannot always remain here. Our only safety must consist in breaking loose from earthly entanglements, and holding ourselves

ready for the heavenward journey. All signs and seasons, all changes and conflicts, all blessings and enjoyments, all losses and disappointments, warn us to keep our eye turned in the direction of the journey on which all must go—from which none return. The way may seem dark and long, and yet the only part of the course which is dark to the eye of faith is that which lies dimly within sight of this earthly home. The darkness and the doubt are all here, where the fearful and the faithless would stay. The life and the light are all yonder, where the trusting and watchful would go. The higher the flight of our faith, the more serene and joyous will be our journey to the heavenly land. We shall do well to imitate the lofty range of the dove, and to make the prayer of the poet our own:

"The bird let loose in Eastern skies,
Returning fondly home,
Ne'er stoops to earth her wing, nor flies
Where idle warblers roam.

"But high she shoots, through air and light,
Above all low delay,
Where nothing earthly bounds her flight,
Nor shadow dims her way.

"So grant me, Lord, from every snare
Of sinful passion free,
Aloft through faith's serener air
To hold my course to thee.

"No sin to cloud, no lure to stay
My soul, as home she springs,
Thy sunshine on her joyful way,
Thy freedom in her wings."

It is not to be expected that every step of our present course will be one of peace and of apparent safety. There would be no discipline in watchfulness and self-command if we could always see the Everlasting Arms around us for our protection. The highest flight is the most clear and joyous, but it requires the strongest wing and the bravest heart. The surest way to the light may seem darkest for a while. The eagle of the Alps is sometimes beaten down by the tempest into the narrow defiles of the mountains. The clouds in black and angry masses sweep between the mighty bird and the sunny heights where she builds her nest and basks in the full day. For a while she dashes to and fro, buffeting the storm with her strong wings and waking the echoes of the mountains with her wild cry, vainly endeavoring to find some way out of her dark and high-walled prison. At length she dashes upward with a scream of triumph into the midst of the black clouds, and in a moment she is above them in the calm sunshine, with the darkness and the tempest all beneath, the light of heaven shining in full blaze upon her conquering pinions, and her loved home on the lofty crag in full sight waiting to receive her. It is through the darkness that she rushes into the light. It is by a mighty effort to ascend that she leaves the clouds and the storms of earth beneath.

So by a firm decision and a mighty effort must we rise above all the clouds of doubt and fear to the serene heights of faith and peace in God. So through the

darkness of trouble and conflict and death must we pass into heaven's eternal day.

This world affords most pleasure and profit to him who makes it his servant and never permits it to become his master. It is only while keeping the world, with all its passions, pleasures and temptations, beneath our feet that we are safe. I have seen the bird of prey in chase of the timid dove. The dove knew that the hawk, in making its attack, must swoop down from a loftier height. And so the defenceless creature rose, circle above circle, higher and higher, toward heaven. Above the hills and above the mountains, and above the morning clouds, the panting fugitive climbed with laboring wing, and all the while the eager hawk went screaming after, striving in vain to reach a loftier height from which to rush down, like a thunderbolt, and seize the prey. But the dove was safe so long as she continued to soar. She had nothing to fear from the talons of her rapacious foe so long as she suffered nothing to entice her back to the earth. But once let her cease to rise, and her watchful enemy would soon reach a loftier elevation, and from thence shoot down with deadly aim for her destruction.

So is it with us in our lifelong conflict with the seductions and temptations of the world. So long as we keep them under, we are safe. So long as we set our affections on things above, and continue to rise higher and higher in the successive attainments of a pure and blameless life, the world may toil after us

with its temptations in vain. To be sure of not sinking, we must never cease from the effort to rise. To win the crown of life, we have only to forget the things that are behind and press forward to those that are before.

God's Treasuries of the Mind.

He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.—Ps. cxxxv. 7.

XII.

GOD'S TREASURIES OF THE WIND.

THE palace of the Vatican at Rome is said to contain more than four thousand apartments. Some of them are of such great length that they might be partitioned into ten divisions, and each division would be long enough for the largest assembly that can be audibly addressed by the human voice. The countless halls, chambers, cabinets, chapels, corridors are stored with the most rare and costly collections in science, art and literature, gathered from every age and every land. The traveler who can stay but a little while in the Eternal City hurries across the Tiber while the clanging bells of Saint Peter's are calling the faithful subjects of the Holy See to morning prayer. He takes his stand at the foot of the royal staircase, ready to press in the moment permission shall be given. He enters, thinking to finish the task of exploration in a few hours, and to spend the remainder of the day in some other quarter of the storied city.

But he finds that the first apartment he enters is so vast and rich in stores of art and antiquity that the whole day is not sufficient to examine that alone

When the hour for closing the gates comes, he goes back to his lodgings, weary and wondering how he shall ever find time to explore the labyrinthine mazes of the mighty palace in all its thousand-fold apartments, when a whole day is not enough for one. He derives his deepest impression of the riches and power of the Papacy from the vast storehouse in which it has treasured up the gifts of faith and affection, received in many centuries from all kings and people of the earth. He wonders what can be the mysterious and mighty spell which has drawn the most beautiful and costly works of art from all quarters of the world to that one vast repository. He stands amazed in contemplation of that awful spiritual sovereignty which once waved the sceptre of its power over subject millions in all lands, and tossed the crowns and sceptres of the earth from hand to hand in wild sport, as if they were the playthings of childhood. He returns to his home with the feeling that to know what the Papacy was in its pride and glory one must see it enthroned in the Cathedral of St. Peter and in the palace of the Vatican.

The universe is the palace in which the infinite God has stored up the works of his hands and the resources of his power. This mighty treasure-house of the Divine Architect has uncounted millions of apartments, extending as wide as the orbs of heaven roll, and as far as the beams of the morning fly. They are filled with infinite treasures of riches and beauty. Our

earth, which seems so vast in the eyes of the inhabitants, is one small room in the palace of the great King. Our present life is the first day given us to begin the study of God's wonders here. We have only just entered the vestibule of the mighty temple which the Almighty Builder has reared for his own glory. Through this great house of his kingdom his immortal children are free to range in wonder and in worship. It will take the whole of our earthly day only to glance at the riches and glories with which we are now surrounded. And we have only to use the present opportunity well to have our minds informed and delighted every hour. Then, when the evening comes and we are weary with our work, we shall be permitted to pass on through the gateway of death, and spend the endless years of eternity in ranging at leisure through the everlasting halls of our Father's many-mansioned house.

In this world God brings forth from his infinite treasury such wonders of his power as we can best understand. He sets them in order for us to study, that we may see his greatness and exalt his name. And when we have learned this the first lesson well, he will throw open other apartments of his mighty palace, and bid us pass on from world to world, and from age to age, in wonder and in joy.

For the present hour let us make a reverent and sacred study of God's treasuries of the wind. Let us see, as far as we can, what secrets of life and what sub-

tleties of power the Infinite Creator has stored up in this invisible deep, whose waves roll over us in the rush of the tempest, and whose murmurs lull us to sleep in the calm. And let us make this study with thoughtfulness and discrimination, that we may the more devoutly worship Him whose way is in the whirlwind and the storm, and who walketh upon the wings of the wind. Let us listen reverently to Him whose Spirit moves upon the pathless deep and whose voice is heard in the viewless air. Let us stand as Elijah stood on the rock of Horeb, and see the goings forth of the divine power in the gentle breeze that waves the bending field of grain, and in the wild tempest which tears the mountain in its fury and uproots the forest in its path.

We shall do well to begin this sacred study with such examples as may be found in the word of Divine Inspiration. The Bible associates the wind with the most impressive and awful manifestations of the presence and power of the Almighty. When the first pair had sinned in Paradise and they hid themselves for shame among the trees of the garden, they heard the voice of the Lord God borne upon the evening wind, saying, "Where art thou? What hast thou done?" And ever since that hour the whisper of the wind in the quiet of the evening and the stillness of night has been a solemn monition of the presence of God to the souls of men. In the silent hours of deep thought and in the lonely places of solitude, the mournful sighing

of the wind still sounds like a voice from the unseen world.

If you were cast ashore upon the loneliest island in the ocean, and you should lie down to sleep at night, fully believing that you were the only human being in that solitude, the whisper of the wind in the waving branches above you would make you feel, as it made Adam feel in the forfeited Paradise, that God is everywhere. We can no more hide ourselves from his presence than we can flee from the all-embracing air. In the ancient languages the word for spirit and air was the same, because to all men the viewless air was the most impressive symbol of the unseen and spiritual world. The slightest breath or whisper of the passing wind in lonely and thoughtful hours made them feel the presence of One whose form no eye had seen, whose voice no ear had heard, save as the savage and the sage see him in clouds and hear him in the wind.

This impression of "untutored minds" is confirmed and deepened by the sacred imagery of divine revelation. The Bible represents the wind as the vehicle of divine power in judgment and in blessing. When the waters of the Deluge had reached their full height, and the vials of wrath had been all poured out upon a guilty world, God blew upon the face of the flood with a mighty wind, and the waves went back into the bed of the sea, and the ancient bounds of the deep were set with bars and doors that it should not pass its

decreed place any more. The wind tore the misty veil from the mountains and dried up the earth, and a new generation found a heritage and a home where the giant sons of an impious race had found a grave.

And so now, when the snows of winter are melted, and the rains of spring have fallen, God brings the thirsty wind out of his treasuries to dry up the ground and prepare the soil for the plough and the seed for the harvest. And the human race would die, and all air-breathing creatures would be swept from the earth, if God did not breathe upon the flooded ground and carry off the superabundant rain upon the mighty wings of the wind. It would take the working force of eight hundred millions of horses, toiling night and day, to transport the water which the wind brings from the sea and pours upon the lands of this single State of Pennsylvania, and gathers up and carries away again every year. And the wind does this mighty work of transportation without any sound of groaning wheels, without any wear or breakage of costly machinery, without any exhaustion of power. The swift and elastic carrier is as fresh for new work when it comes up to the mountains with its immense burden from the sea as when starting at the stroke of the sunbeams upon its long and steep journey. This mighty burden-bearer moves, with the floods of the deep upon its wings, as silently as the spirits of heaven go upon their messages from the throne of the Most High. And it is the coming and going of the wind from the sea to the

mountains, and from the mountains to the sea, that saves the earth from becoming a desert.

When Moses led the great emigration of the ransomed tribes out of Egypt, and the deep lay in their path to the promised land, God blew with his mighty wind upon the sea, and ploughed a channel for his people through the waves with the cutting blast. He made the subtle and viewless air the vehicle of his power in dividing the waters, that men might learn to believe in the presence of Him whose face they cannot see, and follow the guidance of Him whose hand they cannot touch. Jehovah might have appeared in the form of a mighty conqueror, riding upon horses and chariots of salvation, shaking the earth with the thunder of his voice, and cleaving a path for his people through the deep with the stroke of his glittering sword. But he chose rather to make the viewless wind the hiding of his power, that he might help the gross and sensual minds of his people to believe in the awful and supreme reality of things unseen.

This is evermore the great lesson for man to learn. All material things which dazzle the eyes and appeal to the senses are merely passive, and have no essential life. The spirit alone is the source of power. The spirit can never die. The truths which do most to lift men up from their degradation, and make them partakers of the divine nature, are not truths which concern things seen and handled, bought and sold, weighed and measured. They are truths which concern our

spiritual and immortal being, and which would still be infinitely important to us, though the earth and everything in it were burned up and the material heavens had all passed away.

God comes to us, like the viewless wind, to revive our hearts and work within us a new and divine creation. And if we do not welcome the unseen visitant, and receive new life from the quickening Spirit, we shall remain in bondage to corruption and we shall surely die. When the altar of the heart is lighted by fire from heaven, when the inner sanctuary of the soul is possessed and consecrated by an unseen power, then the whole man is moved, as the forest is moved by the rushing wind; then every faculty is swayed by an invisible force, which triumphs over all external conditions, and makes all possession and resources its own.

I have walked alone in the wild forest and heard the sound of a going among the tree-tops, like the marching of myriad hosts, trampling the clouds and sweeping the pathless fields of air. I have stood on the shore of the sea and watched the long ridges of rolling billows, advancing under flying banners of white surf, breaking in ceaseless charge on the everlasting bulwark of the shore. On a quiet summer's afternoon I have suddenly heard a rumbling sound like an earthquake, and at the same time I have seen the whole air darkened with clouds of dust and the flying branches of trees and the fragments of overthrown houses. I have seen a straight and narrow

path ploughed through the forest, with the mighty oak and lofty pine twisted and torn from their roots as the ploughman turns the tender grass and treads upon it.

And in every case the power which produced such mighty effects was hidden in the viewless air. It was nothing but wind. And yet it was high and dreadful. It was crushing and strong. It was the minister of the Almighty to teach man how completely he is surrounded and penetrated in the recesses of his being by the powers of the unseen world. A man might as well say that the sea is calm when the winds are lashing it into fury, or that the branches are motionless when the tempest is roaring through the forest, as to say that the spirit is not mightier than the flesh, or that the soul is not of more worth than the universe of things seen and perishable. The man who should determine to walk only by sight, and believe only in the evidence of the senses, could not live a day in a world where the power that rules everything is unseen, and life itself is a mystery past finding out. Surrounded and controlled as we are every moment by the powers of the spiritual world, faith is the highest reason and skepticism is infinite folly.

Passionately as the skeptic may deny the reality of the unseen world, it is impossible for him to resist its power. He himself lives in the memories of the past and the ideal anticipations of the future quite as much as in the visible, matter-of-fact world of to-day. The path which he treads is dark or bright, according to

the hues cast upon it by his own mind. And so it is with us all. We are constantly conversing with things unseen; we are yielding to the power of influences and impressions which are more subtle than the viewless air. The bereaved mourner sees a face that others cannot see. The loving heart discovers in the object of its affections, excellences that others cannot discern. The tone of the voice, the strain of a tune or song, the utterance of a common thought, will have a world of meaning to one and no meaning at all to another. The wanderer, returning again to the home of his childhood and visiting the graves of those who invoked blessings upon him in his departure, lives again in a world that has passed away; he hears the voices that were hushed in death years before; he walks in companionship with beloved ones whose footsteps are no longer heard upon the paths of life. It is the peculiar faculty of the poet and the artist to give form and expression to thoughts and images which the great heart of our common humanity will recognize at once as its own. And he who has the power to express or to represent what millions have felt but never seen, never heard, will find a friend and admirer in every heart whose experience he has had the skill to interpret.

So does the very constitution of our nature yearn for the unseen, and stretch forth to hold converse with the distant, the departed, the ideal world of our own creation, the vast and mighty realm in which the mind

reigns alone and which the heart peoples with its own affections. We are not moved by the severe and bald aspect of undeniable and everyday reality as deeply as we are by representations which carry us beyond the bounds of the narrow, visible, matter-of-fact world in which we live. The power of eloquence, of poetry, of music and of painting displays itself solely by lifting us up to a loftier range of feeling and of thought, kindling within us greater hopes, purposes and aspirations, and thus showing us that the beauty and the joy of our life must come from things unseen.

On the afternoon of a dark, rainy, smoky day, in the midst of the vast world of London, I passed along the street called the City Road in search of the Bunhill Fields burying-ground. When I came to the place, I found the high, strong iron gate which guarded the entrance locked, and a notice said it would not be opened for two hours. There was no convenient shelter, no suitable place at hand to rest, and it was too far to go to my lodgings and return. I was too intent upon entering the consecrated ground to give it up. And so through two long, weary hours I paced the wet street, waiting for admission. I made excursions in every direction in the vain search for objects of interest to exhaust the time. But I remember nothing that I saw save the low-hanging clouds, the mingled mist and smoke, the dropping rain and the wet and weary street. When at last the gate was thrown open, I hurried in, and passed up and down the long central walk and

through the narrow side-paths, beneath the dripping boughs of trees and over the wet grass in search of one humble grave. At last I found what I was seeking for, as my eye caught this inscription upon a plain block of marble: "Mr. John Bunyan, Author of the Pilgrim's Progress."

And do you say that it was a needless exposure and a vain expenditure of time for me to take so much pains to see that one humble grave? It would have been had I seen nothing but the block of stone and the familiar name before me. But it would require a swifter brush than artist ever held to paint the scenes as they passed before my mental vision in the moments that I stood beside Bunyan's grave. I saw an alarmed and excited man in the City of Destruction, stopping his ears to shut out the tempting voices of those who would dissuade him from the attempt to run for his life. I saw him plunging into the Slough of Despond, and escaping, weary and woestricken, on the other side. I saw him passing beneath the brow of a hill that shone with lightning and shook with thunder, and he trembled exceedingly lest he should be smitten and destroyed. I saw him pass in at the wicket gate, barely escaping the arrows which the archers of Satan shot at him from the loopholes in the neighboring tower. I saw him climbing the Hill Difficulty with weeping eyes and wounded heart, and yet losing his heavy burden at the foot of the cross; and then, after a gladsome day's journey, reposing in the Chamber of

Peace. Then again I saw him wrestling with Apollyon in the Valley of Humiliation, climbing the Delectable Mountains, catching a vision of the golden domes and sapphire walls of the City toward which he was journeying, enjoying the calm delights of the Land of Beulah, and at last passing over the cold river of death, and lost to view amid the dazzling splendors of the angel escort that stood waiting for him on the other side.

I did not need to be a very imaginative man to have all that vision of sorrow and of glory, of conflict and of final rest, pass before my mind's eye as I stood in Bunhill Fields, amid the cold rain and the murky air, reading the simple words, "Mr. John Bunyan, Author of the Pilgrim's Progress." Since that day a prouder monument has been reared on that consecrated spot. But still in all time the thoughtful traveler who stands in Bunhill Fields, where the dust of the Bedford dreamer rests, waiting the resurrection, will see, not the towering marble nor the titled names of those who placed it there, but the Progress of the Christian Pilgrim from the City of Destruction to the City that hath everlasting foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God. Thus are we all indebted to the unseen and spiritual world for our strongest and deepest emotions. We do not need to become enthusiasts, we do not need to adopt anything like visionary or impracticable views of life, to live at all times as seeing Him who is invisible to the eye, yet ever present to the soul.

The Bible makes the winds God's messengers to proclaim his word and to carry his blessings around the world. When the land of Israel was parched with drought, and Elijah went up to the top of Carmel and prayed for rain, the answer to his prayer came in the rushing sound of mighty winds. The winged messengers of the air were commanded to bring abundance of waters from the great sea and pour upon the thirsty ground, that all Israel might know who it is that shutteth up the heavens in judgment and giveth showers of rain in mercy.

In Oriental life it is still common with people who have never read a page of the Inspired Word to speak of the winds as God's messengers. A friend, who has been through all the Bible lands, tells me that once, when himself traveling in the desert, he suddenly heard the cry of the Arabs, "Dismount and prepare to meet the messengers of God." And when he turned to see what the cry meant, he saw the suffocating cloud of dust raised by the hot wind stretching along the horizon and sweeping down upon him with the speed of the hurricane. He had barely time to dismount, prostrate himself upon the earth and cover his head, before the fiery cloud was upon him, sifting its burning dust through every part of his clothing, and making the camels moan with the intolerable miseries of suffocation. It lasted but a few moments, or every man and beast would have perished. And when it was passed, the Arabs said they had been overtaken by the mes

sengers of God. They thus spoke of the winds with as much assurance of their personality and divine commission as Jacob spoke of the angels when God's host met him at Mahanaim.

When the hand of the Lord was upon the prophet Ezekiel in the vision of the valley of death, he was commanded to prophesy unto the wind, and in answer to his word breath came from the four winds upon the slain, and they lived again and stood up before him, an exceeding great army. Thus was it shown unto the prophet that no work of restoration can be too hard for the Lord, and none who trust in him need ever say, as Israel said, "Our hope is lost." He can breathe new life into souls that are dead in sin, and they shall live unto him. He can touch the lips of the dumb with a live coal from the heavenly altar, and they shall become eloquent with his praise.

So it came to pass on the day of Pentecost, when the disciples in the upper chamber at Jerusalem heard a sound from heaven like a rushing, mighty wind, and they were all endued with eloquence and power to speak forth the wonderful works of God. They were ignorant and poor, inexperienced and distrustful. But the descent of power, which came like the rush of winds from on high, made them strong, courageous and successful in fulfilling the greatest commission ever given to man.

God makes the wind his minister, because it is subtle and unseen, it is mysterious and mighty. We cannot

foresee its coming, nor can we tell from what quarter it will blow. It drives the clouds in the heavens and the waves on the sea. It rocks the little bird in its swinging nest, and it tramples down the forest beneath the rushing wheels of the whirlwind. It fans the fevered brow and cools the heated pulse of the feeble invalid as he ventures tremblingly forth from his close chamber to breathe the fresh air. It lashes so terribly with its cutting breath that the strong man cries out in agony, and the fur-clad denizens of the North die in their icy homes. It sweeps the desert with the burning blast of the furnace, and it overwhelms the wandering pilgrim with suffocating clouds and columns of fire. It distills the dew with such gentleness that the most delicate flower is bathed with moisture, but not broken, and it carries the waters of the great deep above the highest mountains, and fills all the rivers of the earth. It thunders in the clouds, it crashes in the earthquake, it moans in the seas, it sings in the utterance of joy, it shrieks in the sharp cry of pain, and it whispers the farewell from the lips of the dying.

And so it is with the coming and the going, the work and the power, of that divine spiritual influence which Christ himself compares to the wind. With the message of these words to the hearts of all that receive them there goes an influence more gentle than the whispering breeze, more mighty than the rushing storm. It is the Spirit of the Holy One, poured forth in mercy to kindle the incense of gratitude and praise

upon the altar of the heart, as the wind blowing over beds of flowers bears the incense of perfume to Him who clothes them with beauty, and accepts, well-pleased, the offering which they bring. As the wind came at the prophet's word in the valley of the vision of death, and the dead stood up an exceeding great army, so comes the Spirit of the Blessed to breathe immortal life and perfect peace into man's burdened and longing soul. And this is ever a fitting prayer for the troubled, the needy and the dying to offer: "Come, O breath of the Divine Life and Love, and breathe upon this desert heart of mine, that I may live and rejoice in God, my Saviour."

Man never attains the full height of his power in action; he never feels the thrill of the most fervid and impassioned joy until he knows what it is to be inspired; until every faculty of his being is pervaded and uplifted by an indwelling spirit. The grosser elements of his nature must be seized upon by a power from above and borne onward as the wind bears the cloud. The whole man must become an embodied thought, a living purpose, a burning emotion, and then he will show what mighty powers lay slumbering within him; then his whole being will thrill with a strange and unutterable joy. The poet feels the inspiration of song, and he pours his fervid soul into lines that will live as long as human hearts can be kindled with the fire of feeling or swayed by the subtle power of love. The orator receives the inspiration of eloquence, and

great assemblies are moved by his words as the wind moves the waves. The soldier is inspired with patriotism, and he endures the fatigues of the long campaign and the terrors of the day of battle as if to him it were the ecstasy of joy to suffer and die for country. In all such cases it is the spirit that takes possession of the man and lifts him above himself, and makes him seem something more than human. And this appearance becomes reality when man receives the highest form of inspiration, even that which is given from above to make him a child of God. That new-creating breath from the Almighty imparts a new life to every faculty of his being and makes him a partaker of the Divine nature.

That blessed influence from above is as ready to be poured upon the thirsty soul as the rain is to fall when the wind brings the clouds; it is as essential to the life of the soul as the air we breathe is to the life of the body. We have only to open our hearts and the living breath from God will come in, just as we have only to expand the chest and the air will rush in with the secret balm of life. Men sometimes stifle themselves in close apartments and complain bitterly of their sufferings, when they have only to throw open the windows or walk forth into the free air, and they will feel new life leaping and kindling in every fibre of their frames. So the souls of men are often shut up in the heated and artificial atmosphere of society, leading a starveling and stifled existence, feeble in faith, blunted

in feeling, unhappy in heart. They have only to open the windows of their souls and let the living breath from God's Spirit come in, and they will become new creatures—they will feel a new life quickening and penetrating every faculty of their being.

And this blessed influence from above is not of such rare occurrence as some suppose. It is everywhere. It falls upon every soul. We can no more flee from it than we can flee from the all-embracing air. Travel as far as we may, hide ourselves in whatever dark place of the earth, we cannot go from the Spirit of the Almighty. And who should wish to go, who shall try to shut out the quickening, life-giving breath of the Divine Comforter from the soul? It will soothe in sorrow, it will strengthen in weakness, it will guide in perplexity. It will make the mind clear and the heart pure and the path of life plain. Amid all the troubles and disappointments of the world it will give a peace that passeth all understanding. Under the deepest cloud of sorrow it will enable the heart to rejoice with joy unspeakable and full of glory.

O my doubting, troubled brother, do me the justice to believe that I know what I am writing about when I say all this. Open your heart and let the restoring, new-creating breath of the Blessed Comforter come in. It is the breath of your life—your soul's life It will do more for you than the south wind for the waiting earth when it brings the rain; more than the rising breeze for the sailor becalmed in mid-ocean; more than

the fresh air for the captive pining in his dungeon; more than the gentle breath of summer for the feeble invalid shivering in the wintry blast. O my poor, comfortless brother, wandering up and down the world n search of peace and finding it not, open your heart to the breath of heaven and peace will come in, as the light of the morning comes in at the open window. Bring your Father the offering of a humble and trusting heart, and the fire of the divine love shall descend and kindle the sacrifice, and a voice from the excellent glory shall say, "This is my beloved Son."

Rain on the Mown Grass.

He shall come down like rain upon the mown grass—as showers that water the earth.—Ps. lxxii. 6.

XIII.

RAIN ON THE MOWN GRASS.

THE oldest book in the world is ever most in advance of the age. The words which were written three thousand years ago are still the best description of all that has yet been attained in human progress and of all that is possible in the future. The unity of nations, the instruction of the ignorant, the deliverance of the oppressed, the prevalence of righteousness, the enjoyment of peace and plenty, the increased productiveness of the earth, which shall be attained in the age of the highest improvement, are all shadowed forth with exceeding beauty in those words of inspiration which were written when the light of revealed truth shone only upon one small land, and all the rest of the world was veiled in heathen darkness. The horrors and the injustice of war, the beauty and blessing of peace, are most fittingly described in those inspired compositions which were put upon record when the earth was full of violence, and the supreme law for the government of the nations was the law of the sword. And when now we would give the richest and loftiest expression to our hopes for the future, we go back

twenty-five hundred years upon the track of time and ask the old Hebrew psalmists and prophets to speak for us. When I would inspire men with the loftiest sentiments of humanity and benevolence, when I would awaken in their hearts the most ardent expectation of a reign of righteousness in all the earth, I quote a composition which was written before Rome was founded, before the history of Greece began. Railroads and telegraphs, steamships and printing-presses, constitutions and cotton-gins, are all involved in the beautiful and exhaustless imagery of the holy men of old.

There is something peculiarly quiet and gentle in the descriptions of great changes of the future, and the mode in which they shall come to pass. The righteousness of that day shall be enthroned in the person of a King, and yet it shall cover all like the clouds, and it shall descend upon all like the rain. The blessings of abundance and peace shall come down like rain upon the mown grass and like showers that water the earth.

The imagery reminds us pleasantly of summer showers, which we have often seen with our own eyes coming down upon the thirsty earth. At such times there have been many days of fair weather, and in every direction the smoothly-shaven meadows show that the busy haymakers have used the season well in completing their task. The green mantle of the waving grass has been rolled up from the fields and carried away to the sheltering barns. The short stub-

ble that remains cannot protect the roots from the burning sun. Every day dries up the soil more and more, and the dews of the night cease to fall upon the parched ground. Weeks pass on, and it looks at last as if the green grass would never grow again upon the mown field.

At length the sky begins to change. The coppery haze melts from the face of the sun. The low murmur in the distant woods, the gentle tremor that runs along the tree-tops, while as yet there is no wind, the bees coming home to their hives and the house-doves flying to their windows for shelter, all indicate that the pitying angel of the sea has heard the prayer of the parched earth and is coming with the blessed rain in his cloudy wings. At length white fleeces of vapor begin to form out of the sky that a moment before was clear. Heavy masses of darker shadow bend around the shoulders of the hills and trail their jagged fringes through the valleys. Swift outriders of mist, with flying plumes and torn banners, dash out from the horizon, while the heavy battalions of rain-cloud come on in orderly march, with magazines of many waters in their train. The trumpeting winds begin to sound, and the waving column of blue rain advances at the call and sweeps by, until the whole heavens become one cloud, and the whole air comes down in cooling drops upon the parched earth, like the tears of pity falling upon the brow that is burning with fever and bowed with grief. The harvest-fields drink in the blessing as wandering Arabs

drink when they find springs in the desert. The dry stubble of the mown grass revives. The withered roots shoot out new fibres into the moist earth. A dozen green blades spring up where one has been cut away by the mower's scythe. And so the new growth goes on while the gentle showers continue to fall, until the bare field becomes a floor of emerald, fit to be trodden by feet that walk upon the crystalline sea of heaven.

So shall the blessed rain of righteousness and peace come down on the earth in those promised days of the future when the right arm of wrong shall be broken and holy love shall find a home in all the habitations of men. So even now comes the blessed rain of the quickening Spirit upon the parched and burning desert of the human heart. So comes the meek and gentle Christ to set up his throne where Satan long has had his seat and groaning millions have cried in vain for release from captivity.

The help which the soul needs is such as no science or art or invention of man can bring. It must come like the rain from above. Great as are the interests of time, and far-reaching as are the aims of human ambition, they cannot satisfy the necessities of the soul. They cannot give us peace while we live, nor hope when we die. What we all need is to think less of earth and more of heaven—to abate our ardor in search of happiness here, and be content to wait for a better portion hereafter. Christ comes from above to tell us

of that other home and to teach us the way thither. He makes the path bright with his own steps, like the bow on the rain-cloud when the thunder and the darkness of the tempest are passing away. He takes us by the hand to set our feet on the heavenly road. While we linger and hesitate to climb, he comes and goes i full sight on the shining steep, that we may see the course and believe it safe.

The blessing from above comes like the rain to the needy and the perishing. The saddest sight in all the world of Nature is a land smitten with drought. If the rains continue to be withholden, famine succeeds, and all other afflictions follow in its train. The green grass is changed to dry stubble, the soil is baked into a hard crust of clay, or beaten into dust and blown about by the hot and suffocating wind. The whole air seems as if it had been strewn with ashes from the furnace. Fires break out in the forests, the dry turf burns to the lowest depths of the soil, and the rising smoke becomes so thick that the wind cannot blow it away. The heavens mourn as if covered with sackcloth, the light of the stars cannot struggle through the burning mist, and the moon is turned into blood. The wells and fountains fail, the streams sink slowly into their lowest bed and disappear in the sand. The green foliage of fruit trees and grain-fields rolls up and rustles like straw in the threshing-floor. Domestic flocks fall down exhausted in their wanderings for water, and give up their life with a moan. Wild

beasts come out of their hiding in the forests and seek their food among the dwellings of men. The sounds of labor cease to be heard in the workshops and the fields. Fever comes to the help of famine, and sickness destroys where hunger spared. Despair settles down upon all minds, and the fountains of pity are dried up in all hearts. The dying cry in vain for help. The dead lie unburied in the houses and along the highways.

All this has been experienced many times in lands where the Bible was written. It has been a dread reality within the memory of some who are still children in portions of the Eastern world. Three years ago a million human beings starved to death in a single province in India. Thirty millions of people perished by the same awful death in one year, under British rule, in the valley of the Ganges. And all this misery came upon the homes of men because the showers of heaven failed to water the earth. The angel of the waters would not come up from the sea to the mountains with the treasures of the deep on his wings, in answer to the prayers of the perishing, and there was nothing left for millions to do but to suffer and die.

And this awful blight, which is caused by drought, is a fit symbol of the needy condition of the human soul until Christ comes like the rain upon the parched ground. It is impossible to exaggerate in describing the spiritual destitution of the world without a Saviour. The great and sore plague of sin upon the heart is the

cause of all other plagues which have spread through all lands and brought pain and sorrow upon every human soul. And Christ comes to take away sin and heal all the sorrows that sin hath caused. Christ finds us clinging to the earth and writing our names in the dust, and h kindles in our hearts desires and aspirations which tak hold on God and make us heirs of heaven and eternity. He finds us abusing or neglecting the most awful and immeasurable capacities for good, and he shows us that we can become the equals of archangels, and begin a blessed life which shall be measured only by the everlasting years of God. He finds us setting at naught the most costly lessons of experience, violating the solemn admonitions of conscience, and planting our most cherished hopes in the barren sand. He restores reason to its rightful throne, brings us into harmony with ourselves, and scatters the dark shadow from our path with one glance of his eye. He finds our souls a barren waste, and he makes them bloom with the flowers of Paradise and bring forth fruit unto eternal life.

In some Eastern lands, where the sky is without a cloud for half the year, the return of the rain changes the whole face of nature as if it were a new creation. The wild tract of country in South Africa, called the Karroo, seems a perfect waste at the close of the dry season. For miles and miles not a green leaf nor a living blade of grass can be seen. The hard, white clay, mixed with sand and pebbles, reflects the rays of the sun with such intolerable fervor that the traveler

seems to be walking over the burning lava of a volcano. Wild birds will not fly across the hot and stifling waste, and even serpents and beasts of prey shun it as they shun the fire. And yet, when the rain comes in its season, all that wild and howling waste becomes pasture-ground for cattle. Beautiful flowers shoot up and shine with all the magical brilliancy of tropical climes, and the desert becomes a garden under the blessing of the rain.

And so Christ ever comes to the human soul to revive and to bless. He comes to bring forth the flowers and fruits of Paradise in the waste of the hardest and most uncultivated heart. He comes to make life richer and purer—to make even losses and afflictions the means of profit and reasons for gratitude. He comes to open new fountains of joy in the heart, as the rain opens fountains in the desert and causes springs of living water to gush forth among the hills. He comes to give us a purer atmosphere to breathe, and a brighter light to shine upon the path of duty, as the air is freshened by the summer shower and the sky is clearer when it has been darkened by the cloud and swept by the rain. He comes to bring forth in our souls the beautiful flowers of immortal hope and the golden harvests of eternal love, as the rain clothes the waste with blossoms, covers the fields with grain and loads the orchards with fruits. Christ comes to lift the heavy burdens from weary shoulders, to remove the fetters from suffering limbs and captive souls, to dissi-

pate the dark shadow from afflicted homes, to make all labor and trial and temptation a means of improvement and something to be thankful for. It would be the grandest discovery the world has ever made if all men could learn that Christ comes only to bless, and that all hearts and homes would be revived by his coming as much as the waste is revived by the rain.

When the rain first falls the air is darkened, the light of the sun is shut out, the song of birds is hushed, the foliage is bedewed with tears, the flowers fold their leaves and bow their heads as if in grief. All the elements of conflict and ruin seem to have taken possession of the peaceful heavens and the suffering earth. But when the cloud has swept by, and left the blessing of the rain behind, the light breaks forth with new brilliancy, the whole face of Nature is wreathed in smiles, and all the singing tribes in the woods and meadows lift up their voices in thankful song.

And so to many a poor burdened soul it seems a dark hour when Christ comes laden with blessings to make heaven in his heart. He wants to be happy, and Christ makes him weep. He wants to think well of himself, and the sight of the blessed Christ, crowned with thorns and nailed to the cross, makes him feel the burden of his sins as he never did before. He wants to look the world in the face and carry his head as high as the proudest and the best, and when he looks upon the meek and lowly Christ, he feels like bowing down to the dust with shame and humiliation. He wants to

move on in the journey of life easily, and Christ lays a cross upon his shoulders and bids him carry it all the way.

He is surprised and disappointed, and he wonders how it can be said that religion makes people happy. But let him receive Christ, even though the silent look of the suffering Saviour should break his heart and make him weep. Let him receive Christ as the thirsty field receives the rain and the perishing grass receives the dew, and he shall be lifted up from his humiliation and his face shall be clothed with gladness, as the flowers lift up their heads with new beauty after the rain has weighed them down with tears. We should think it a very foolish thing for a gardener to cover his beds of flowers lest they should be wet and beaten down by the rain. The plants thus sheltered from the summer showers would droop and die. And so when the love of Christ comes upon you, dear friend, like the rain, and its first effect is to bow down your head and make you unhappy, still receive, reverently and gladly, that holy baptism from above, and it will make your face shine like flowers wet with the morning dew —it will make your heart sing like the birds after the rain.

Our Father maketh his sun to rise on the evil and the good; he sendeth rain on the just and the unjust. No monopoly of man can restrict the bounty of the sun. No decrees of sect or sovereign can tell the clouds on whom to pour their gifts. The treasures of

heaven are open for the young ravens when they cry, not less than when sovereigns appoint the well-ordered prayer and great cathedrals pour the choral strain. The flowers and the mown fields rejoice in the descending rain as if it had been sent only to relieve their thirst, and the little sparrow chirps its gratitude for the timely shower as if the blessing were all its own. God sends the rain, and swollen brooks shine through the valleys and leaping torrents sing on the mountain side; the revived grass bends with the burden of gratitude, and the parched field renews the promise of harvest; the grazing flocks go forth with joy to the green pastures, and all the singing tribes of the air unite in hymns of gratitude and praise. God sends the rain and all nature is revived. The sun shines with a more cheering light, the landscape glows with a new beauty, and every breath of air is quickened with new life. It woos the pale invalid to the open window to breathe its fragrance; it kisses the fair cheek of the innocent babe and leaves it flushed with roses; it creeps in through the grated door of the stony cell, and whispers in the ear of the hardened criminal that he need only be a child again and he shall find a place in his Father's heart and a home in his Father's house; it sweeps through the narrow street in the crowded city, gathering up the lurking poison and carrying it away on its wings; it flies over the tree-tops and sets every leaf in a tremor of joy at its coming; it restores the waning strength of the aged and the feeble, and it

makes the hearts of the young and the happy beat with electric fire; it gives hope to the despondent and comfort to the afflicted and life to the dying.

All this can the air do when freshened and quickened by the showers that water the earth. And this great bounty of our Father in giving the rain is set before us by Christ to teach us the great lesson of love as large as His who maketh the sun to rise and the rain to fall. When the summer cloud covers the heavens every shining drop which descends to the earth is a messenger from our Father, commissioned to say to us in his name, "Let your love be as large as mine." When our hearts are heated with strife and tortured with suspicion, and shriveled with selfishness, God brings his rain-cloud over the earth and pours down his blessing as bountifully upon the objects of our aversion as upon ourselves, and a heavenly voice goes singing along the pathway of the shower, "Be the children of your Father in love to all, and give at the cry of the needy as freely as he gives the rain." When you have wandered away from your Father and made the best years of life a waste, and your distrustful heart is afraid to return, the first shower that comes over the earth will rebuke your fears with the million voices of the falling drops: "He will revive and raise you up as the rain revives the withered grass. His going forth is prepared as the morning that fills the world with light. He will come to you as the rain that clothes the waste with life and beauty."

We all know that the rain must fall or everything will droop and die, and yet we are seldom quite ready for it when it comes. If God should wait for all to be prepared and pleased before sending the rain, it would be so long in coming that everything would die of drought. Somebody is upon a journey, and would rather get home before the shower; somebody is at work in the fields, and would not like to leave his task before finishing it; somebody has planned a joyous festivity, and would like to have the skies fair all day and the stars shine all night. And so if everybody should be asked, and the blessing of the rain should be withheld till all gave consent, millions would perish before it came.

And it is even harder to get a universal consent to the coming of Him whose blessing descends upon the hearts of men like the rain upon the mown grass. "Not yet," says the little child playing among the flowers when Jesus calls and says, "Follow me." "Not yet," says the ardent and pleasure-loving youth, whose fiery heart is full of hope, and whose fervid mind can find no joy in bearing the cross. "Not yet," says the young man, whose eye is dazzled with the glitter of wealth, and whose ear is charmed with the trumpet-blast of fame. "Not yet," says the hard-working man of middle life, whose shoulders are wearied all day with burdens heavier than he can bear, and whose heart is pained with bitter anxieties in the wakeful hours of the night. "Not yet," says the unhappy old

man, sinking into the grave with the weight of years, and having no hand on which to lean when descending into the valley of the shadow of death. All with one consent begin to make excuse when Jesus comes as the rain comes to the thirsty earth. And why not yet? Is it too soon to accept a blessing which God gives as freely as he gives the sunshine? Is it too soon to forsake earth's bitter fountains for waters which God's love has made sweet, and which shall spring up into eternal life in the soul? Can there be too much haste in obeying the call when Jesus says, "Follow me?"

God's Blessing as the Dew.

I will be as the dew unto Israel.—HOSEA **xiv. 5.**

XIV.

GOD'S BLESSING AS THE DEW.

IMAGINE myself standing upon the summit of the Righi, an hour before sunrise, waiting, in high expectation, for the king of day to come from the chambers of the morning and shed the glory of his face upon the wakening earth. It is mid-summer, and the whole landscape that lies beneath and around me dimly rising to view in the growing dawn affords the most striking contrasts of icy solitudes and blooming cultivation. In all the world there is scarcely another scene which comprises in one view such an abundant display of the creative Might that made the world and filled it with blessings for man. When lighted up with the full glory of the risen sun, it will seem like a vision of Paradise let down from God out of heaven.

As I stand and gaze, the whole vast panorama of mountain and hill and valley and lake, wild forest and cultivated fields and waving harvests, comes forth slowly with the dawn from the darkness, gently laying aside the pall and shroud of night, and putting on its robes and splendors for the coronation of the king of day.

And now the morning mists begin to rise and flow together, until I can count a score of white lakes embosomed among the dark-wooded hills. Masses of vapor float into the narrow valleys and look like bays and broad river-mouths, laving the base of high and shadowy cliffs. And now, as the dawn grows apace, the mists melt into air and the actual lakes are seen with their steel-bright surfaces lying far down in the deep setting of the mountains. And now the east begins to burn with the near approach of the coming glory, and the white glaciers look like streams of molten lava flowing down the rifts of the mountain wall that stretches a hundred miles eastward and westward along the horizon. Brighter than the glaciers, the virgin snow on the highest peaks catches the first beams of the sun and burns to the very heavens with solid flame. A hundred mountain-tops are all ablaze, and the fire burns downward to the dark base of green woods, and then breaks out in an efflorescence of purple and blue and emerald over the wild pastures and orchards and cornfields sleeping among the hills. The gates of the morning are thrown wide open for the coming of the king of day:

> "Lo! now apparent all,
> Aslant the dew-bright earth and colored air,
> He looks in boundless majesty abroad,
> And sheds the shining day, that burnished plays
> On rocks and hills and towers, and wandering streams,
> High gleaming from afar."

It is a sight worth traveling half round the world to see. It is a revelation of beauty and splendor to be remembered, as the prophet remembered the day when the hand of the Lord was upon him and he saw visions of God by the river Chebar.

And now comes on the full day. The rosy tints of the long mountain range give place to the cold gleaming white of virgin snow, the rising mists melt into transparent air; the sounds of busy life in the awakened villages, the call of shepherds and the tinkling of bells as the flocks go forth to their pasturage rise faintly from below, and the whole landscape of mountain and hill and plain, still lakes and smoking villages and shining streams, stands forth clearly defined and fully embraced in one sweep of the eye.

There are many elements which combine to give the contrasts of light and shade and the glow of life and beauty to this most enchanting scene. But few observers are aware how much the charm and freshness of the whole mighty vision of inconceivable splendor depends upon that gentle, silent ministration of Nature which consists in the falling of the night's dew. The freshness of the flowers of Eden, and the beauty of the green landscape in man's garden-home, were all derived from the dew, for as yet the Lord God had not caused it to rain upon the earth. And the scenes that are most like Paradise in man's worldwide home are still blessed and beautified by the gentle dew. Without it, the air would no longer reflect the varied hues of the

morning, nor would the clouds come trooping in dazzling procession to escort the descending car of the king of day. The earth would put on mourning garments of dusky brown or funeral black. The sun would hang a ball of red and angry fire in a hot and coppery sky, and the sweet singers of the grove would pant upon their heated nests, careless of the voice of the morning. The hills, no longer wet with daily baptism from the dewy air, the plains, no longer shining in the morning light with coronets of pearly dew, would look as if smitten by some awful curse and doomed to perpetual barrenness and desolation.

The land of Israel was peculiarly dependent on the dew of heaven for the beauty of its landscape and the fertility of its soil. On the heights of Hermon and Tabor and Gilboa it fell in abundance like the rain, and it enriched the slopes of Carmel and the plain of Sharon like streams in the south. When the dew ceased it seemed as if some mysterious curse had smitten all the hidden powers of nature, and the smile of the sweet heaven had been changed to frowns of wrath. The sun shed a sickly and disastrous light and the moon was changed to blood. The murmur of the wind seemed like the wail of wandering spirits in the night, and the feathered tribes gave no song in response to the call of the morning. The husbandman wept as he gazed upon his parched fields, and the bleating flocks wandered wearily in search of green pasturage among the hills.

It was natural, therefore, that the silent and refreshing fall of the dew should often be used in the Sacred Scriptures as a symbol of the sweetest and gentlest ministrations of God's Spirit and word to man. When the blind old man Isaac would invoke the choicest of all spiritual and temporal blessings upon the head of his beloved son Jacob, and upon his posterity through all generations, he said, "God give thee of the dew of heaven." When Moses would repeat and confirm the prayer and the prophecy in behalf of Joseph and of the whole nation, he said, "Blessed of the Lord be his land for the dew—his heavens shall drop down dew." When God fed the famishing host of his people with angels' food for forty years in the desert of Arabia, the bread of heaven came in the night like the silent dew; it lay in the light of the morning like frozen dew all round the camp. When the great Hebrew lawgiver addressed the tribes of Israel for the last time, and he would give his last counsels in the most impressive words, he broke forth into inspired song before all the congregation, saying, "My speech shall distill as the dew."

When the patient and afflicted patriarch Job would describe the light that shone upon his path and the peace that abode in his tabernacle in the day of his prosperity, he said, "The dew lay all night upon my branch." The Psalmist compares the unity of brethren to the dew of Hermon which descended upon the mountains of Zion, where the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for ever more. When David poured

out his passionate lament for the death of Saul and Jonathan, and he would invoke the most withering curse upon the disastrous field where the mighty had fallen, he said, "Let there be no dew upon you, ye mountains of Gilboa." And in like manner, when Elijah was commissioned to stand before Ahab and call down the most awful judgment upon apostate Israel, he declared, in the name of the living God, that there should be no dew in the land for years but according to his word. Not only should the rains of heaven be withholden, but not even the gentle moisture of the dew should cool the parched earth.

The later prophets describe the peace and abundance of the millennial age by saying that the heavens shall give their dew. And God himself promises the greatest spiritual blessing to his people when he says, "I will be as the dew unto Israel." And in all time that chosen people, blessed of the Lord and nourished like a tender plant with the dews of divine grace, shall grow as the lily and cast forth their roots like Lebanon. Their branches shall spread, and their beauty shall be as the green olive tree. They shall revive as the corn and grow as the vine. The scent thereof shall be as the wine of Lebanon.

This figurative language of the sacred writers has lost none of its meaning or beauty with the advance of time. The more carefully we study the subtle chemistry of the dew, the more fully shall we see its fitness to stand as the symbol of God's most gracious minis-

trations to revive and to strengthen our souls in the way of life. When we have searched through all that the severest science can teach concerning the nature of the dew, we shall only discover additional fitness and beauty in the imagery of psalmists and prophets, who spake as they were moved by divine inspiration.

The dew comes unsought, and it falls while men sleep. The wild bird welcomes the morning light with a song, because the dew has given freshness to all the air and "sown the earth with orient pearl." And yet that unconscious worshiper does not sing its evening supplication for the dew. We ourselves implore the guardianship of the unsleeping Eye while we slumber. We ask for showers to refresh the earth. When God shuts up the heavens and there is no rain, we fast and pray and millions mourn. Without the dew the fairest landscape would soon seem as if it had been all burnt over with fire, and men would look up with "mad disquietude to the dull sky," as if it were "the pall of a past world." And yet who ever prays for the dew? Who thanks God for the blessing which it brings? The gentle dew which revives the life of every living thing comes unasked, and it falls while we sleep.

So came the first promise of spiritual blessing to the lost world. It came unsought, and the sinning pair whom it came to save hid themselves among the trees of the garden to escape its coming. When the Son of the Blessed began his search through all the wastes of sin and sorrow to find and save the lost, he came to

his own and his own received him not. He was rejected and despised, and the great world went on its dark way, just as if the Sun of Righteousness had not risen upon it with healing in his wings. The great Shepherd is ever going up and down the wilderness to seek and restore his lost sheep, and yet millions give no heed when he calls. It is enough to break our hearts when we consider how much more constantly our heavenly Father is thinking of us than we of him. We lie down to sleep, and he keeps us in safety all the night. We wake and find our hearts beating, and our faculties obey the command of the will as they did the day before. Our sleep is a sinking into nothingness every night. Our waking is a resurrection from the dead every morning. In every fibre of our frames, in every faculty of our minds, in every pulsation of life, we are receiving tokens of God's watchful care every moment. His most precious blessings encompass us and steal in upon our souls as gently as the dew falls at night. Let this consideration touch our hearts with tenderness and deep gratitude. Our Father is thinking and caring for us in ten thousand ways when we have no thought of him. He comes to bring us countless blessings without waiting to be asked, and they are so precious that we must receive them or perish. If our Father should forget us for once, or should come to our help only when we call him, we should feel the sting of pain in every nerve, we should be in despair every hour. God must give exceeding abundantly above all

that we can ask or think, or our existence will be a burden rather than a blessing.

The dew falls in gentleness and silence. No sight or sound indicates its coming. We know of its presence only when we see that it has already fallen. When the heavens are dark with threatening clouds, when the waves of the deep break with angry dissonance upon the rocky coast, when the trees of the forest bend and groan in the night wind, there is no dew. A long succession of disturbed and windy nights, with skies overcast with clouds that give no rain, drains the vital moisture from the earth and brings no relief from the gentle dew.

The heavenly Comforter shuns the noise and conflict of the world. The voice that moves heaven and earth with its power is more gentle than a sleeping infant's breath, when it speaks in the secret place of the soul. We know that the new-creating Spirit has descended into the depths of our hearts only as we know that the gentle wind is moving on the lake by the ripple on the surface of the water. When better desires and emotions arise within us, we know that the inner sea of our being has been stirred by breath from heaven. When Jesus shows himself to his disciples, they do not hear the sound of his coming. He breathes upon them and the blessing of peace enters their hearts. He opens their eyes to see him, and behold he is already in the midst of their assembly.

When society is disturbed by the gusts and tempests

of human passion, when the noise of controversy is loud and long continued, when all ears and tongues of men are made familiar with the great swelling words of boasting and strife, which are clouds without water and tempests of wind without rain, then there is drought and famine in the garden of the Lord. The visitation of his Spirit is withholden, and the preaching of his word is without power. It is only when the storm is past and quietness succeeds to agitation, that the sweet influences of the divine grace are felt. Then only the dew of Heaven's richest blessing descends upon the waste places that had been parched by the dry wind of controversy and burnt by the unhallowed fire of fraternal strife. Then the people of God deplore the leanness which contention has brought upon their souls and the desolation with which it has wasted the heritage of the Lord. Then they go into secret places to bewail their sins, to commune with their own hearts and to walk thoughtfully before the Lord of hosts, and then the dew of Heaven's delayed blessing descends in gentleness and in silence.

The great work which we all have to do for God and our own salvation is not one which can be best done in a state of excitement and agitation. It is something to be thought of in quietness and peace. It is something to be done, not simply when the soul is on fire with the fervors of emotion, and feeling has taken the place of thought, and the helm of self-control has been lost in the sea of excitement and conflict. God's

Spirit moves upon the mind and heart together. The rational thought and the right feeling, the sound mind and the pure heart, come from the same source. Both are quiet and strong. The movement of God's Spirit upon the soul is like the gentle wind, which would not be thought to be moving at all if we did not see the foliage waving. It is like the summer breeze, which cannot be felt, and yet under its gentle pressure the harvest-field waves in billows like the sea. The voice of the Spirit is still and small, and yet it is more persuasive than any speech of man; it is the mightiest power in the universe to wake the dead to life and to bring the wandering soul to God.

The dew is ever near and abundant in the great storehouse of the atmosphere, but it falls only upon objects that are prepared to receive it. There may be as much moisture in the air when no dew appears as when it falls most abundantly. The gifts and graces of God's Spirit are ever great and free. To possess and enjoy them there must be a preparation in our own hearts. Sometimes it seems as if our Father had hidden his face from us, and all our cries and supplications are lost upon the empty air. At another time without effort we mount upon the wings of faith to the very gates of heaven. Sometimes we make the most fervid and impassioned appeals in behalf of the truth, and our words fall upon the hearts of men like sunbeams upon icicles in a winter's day. At another time a word, a tone, a look, will break through the flood-

gates of feeling and open the fountains of tears. And this diverse experience gives occasion for the impression that at times the kingdom of heaven is brought very nigh and at others it is far off. But the change is in us, not in the conditions of securing the greatest spiritual blessing. The entrance to the kingdom of heaven is an open door. It has been thrown wide open by Christ's own hand. He sends out heralds in every direction to say to all, Come in. The gate is not barred nor guarded by flaming swords. The whole array of means and influences set before us in the gospel is designed to draw all in, to shut none out. If any fail to enter, it must be because they choose to stay without.

On the same night dew falls abundantly upon some objects and not at all upon others. The source and conditions of supply are the same to all, but there is a difference in the objects themselves. Every green leaf, every live blade of grass, whether skirting the roadside, carpeting the fields or clothing the forest, receives the refreshing dew upon its surface and sparkles with rainbow tints in the morning light. But the hard-beaten and artificial road, the dead, cold stone, the leafless and barkless trunk of the blasted tree, receive no dew.

In the same season of spiritual visitation from on high, some hearts are abundantly watered with the dews of the divine grace, and others are as the heath in the desert that knoweth not when good cometh. Every living, fruit-bearing branch is sure to be watered.

that it may bring forth more fruit. But those whose hearts are as the beaten and dusty track of the public road—open for the passage of all the world's burdens and business—are still dry and lifeless and unrefreshed by the gentle showers descending all around them. There are times when it seems as if we were breathing the very air of Heaven, and yet even then the precious dews of the divine blessing can find no place of contact with souls that are all in love with earthly things. If you would not become as dry and fruitless as the dusty road, you must not let your heart be made a public highway for the world's burdens and business to pass over till it becomes as hard and insensible as the trodden pavement. You must not sow the world's thorny cares where God would plant the word of life. You must not suffer the wicked one to steal away the precious seed before it has taken root in your heart.

The dew of the night does not fall upon bodies that are slow to impart their warmth to others. Those who water others shall themselves be watered. Those who give the warmth of their own hearts to comfort others shall themselves be comforted. But those who can be afflicted only by their own sorrows, who can enjoy only their own blessings, labor only for their own good, must be in the end comfortless and desolate. To receive, we must give. To be happy ourselves, we must live to make others happy. Our own hearts will be filled with all joy and peace when we are ready to pour out

all our desires and affections and efforts that others may share our joy.

The dew does not fall from above like the rain, and yet it appears only on objects that are exposed to the open sky. If we would receive the gentle dew of the divine grace we must suffer nothing to come between our hearts and Heaven. It is our privilege and duty as God's children to come directly to him and ask a Father's blessing. You have no need to wait for favorable times, and places, and occasions, when you desire the deepest experience of God's love in the heart. The Divine Helper is ever near with infinite blessing in his hand, and it shall be all yours the moment you give up all to him. Take away the covering of worldliness and unbelief from your heart, and the heavenly dew will descend upon you in such fullness that you cannot ask for more.

Dew falls but little upon the smooth and brilliant surface of polished steel or burnished gold, while coarser and less costly objects are freely wet. The gentle dew of the heavenly grace often takes effect upon the rude and uncultivated, while the refined, the tasteful and the critical are left, like frost-work, brilliant and beautiful, but cold and dead. The acute and finely-cultivated Greeks, the stately and imperial Romans, were not the first to perceive the divine simplicity and the perfect beauty in the life and teachings of Jesus. And to many in our day the solemn ordinances of religion are all mere matters of taste. They would have the singing

and the sermon, the prayers and the preaching, the minister and the people, simply an exhibition in the fine arts, so elegant and polished that the dews of the divine grace cannot touch them. They would make it the chief object of the gospel of Christ to delight select audiences with fine music, and perfect elocution, and a few sparkling gems of thought on any subject that an ingenious mind can make interesting. If the odious and awful subject of sin is touched upon at all, it must be done with so many graces of speech and manner as not to disturb the most delicate sensibility. If the arrows of truth are aimed at their hearts, the bow must be drawn so gently as not to cause a wound or inflict a pang. There is some hope for men who are frank and honest enough in their wickedness to wish to have their sins called by their right names. But the preacher needs nerves of iron and the faith of martyrs to tell over and over again the same homely and humbling story of the cross to people who come to church only to applaud anything that is beautiful, and to be pleased with anything that is done in good taste.

The dew of heaven is like God's spiritual blessing in its mighty effects and in its minute and gentle application. It comes out of its hiding in the air, and goes back with a step light as the sunbeams. The down upon the peach or plum is so delicate and so thickly set that you cannot touch the fruit with a needle's point without breaking the tender stalks. And yet the dew of night covers the whole surface of the fruit and

disappears in the morning, leaving the gossamer growth more orderly and beautiful than before. The dew covers every leaf of the giant oak, and the mighty tree drinks in the refreshing moisture to its thirsty heart through millions of pores, and the iron trunk, that has withstood a thousand storms, is made stronger by the gentle strength of the dew.

And so the blessed dew of divine grace can refresh and strengthen equally the strongest and the most tender and sensitive heart. The words that you speak with the utmost kindness to comfort the afflicted may only serve to open all their sorrows afresh. And yet the Divine Comforter can take away all their grief so gently that they shall not know when or how they have been comforted—only the burden is gone. There is no fear or doubt or perplexity of mind too deep or dark to be reached by the sweet and searching influence of the divine love. The benighted wanderer may be led forth into the path of light and peace so gently that he shall not think he has been led at all, only he has found the right way. And all equally need the help from above, which is as gentle as the fall of the dew and as constant as the night. The feeblest flower and the mightiest tree receive life and strength from the same source.

The silent and gentle fall of the dew is caused and controlled by agencies of the most tremendous and resistless power. The earthquake stirs itself in its secret chamber for a few seconds and the everlasting

mountains tremble. The solid crust of the globe is rent beneath our feet. The sternest face turns pale. The stoutest heart is melted with fear. And yet the power which shakes a whole continent with its subterranean thunders is the same as that which encircles the finest filament of thistle-down with a coronet of dewy gems so small that they do not bend the delicate stalk with their weight. The tornado covers the heavens with darkness and desolates the earth and seas in one brief hour of its stormy wrath. And yet the same power which sends forth the tornado upon the pathway of ruin silently bedews every green thing at night, and lends new beauty to the summer landscape every morning. The same electric force which speaks in the thunder and flashes in the lightning, and flings its fiery bolts from cloud to cloud, slumbers in the silent air of our bed-chambers, fills every vein and charges every fibre of our bodies. It puts forth its mightiest agency in changing a drop of water to the dew which turns to frost on the window-pane in a winter's day. It lends its awful and mysterious might for the transmission of man's more subtle and mysterious thought along the electric wire, from nation to nation and from continent to continent, all round the globe.

And so nothing is so gentle as the sweet influences of God's Spirit, encouraging the faint-hearted, strengthening the feeble, reclaiming the wandering, expostulating with the disobedient. And yet that mighty

Spirit, who deals with us so gently, governs all things in the universe and holds at his disposal the infinite destinies of time and eternity. The thunders and the tempests, the quenchless fires and the blackness of darkness, are all at his command. But he visits us as gently as the dew falls upon the tender flower. He employs the sweetest and the most benignant influences to draw our hearts to holiness, to happiness and to heaven. He deals kindly, tenderly, patiently with us all, and yet he can be wearied with coldness, he can be grieved away by neglect. Alas for them who constrain this mighty and merciful Friend to leave them! They shall be as the barren mountains without dew, and as the waste places of the wilderness without rain.

The River of God's Pleasures.

Thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.—Ps. xxxvi. 8.

XV.

THE RIVER OF GOD'S PLEASURES.

NEXT to mountains and seas, rivers are the most strongly marked features of the earth's surface. Mountains are the skeleton, rivers the life current, the fertile soil and all that grows upon it the living substance of the body of the globe. All together they harmonize in one life, they work for one common end, and they have a history extending through centuries of time. Without the mountains, there would be no rivers; without the rivers, the earth would be a universal waste. The hand that can touch the fountains of the rivers and seal them up, can send the track of desolation through mighty realms and fill the homes of millions with mourning and death.

Rivers break through the barriers of the mountains and level a broad highway for nations which never wears out. Rivers wear for themselves channels in the solid rock where the boldest engineer would not attempt to cut his way through. Rivers carry the tribute of a thousand hills to the plains. All the transports in the world could not enrich the lowlands with such abundance as one great river bears in its waters. It makes

the barren mountains support the life of millions. Rivers build up new territory for cultivation where the sea had undisputed possession.

Rivers have directed the tide of emigration ever since the first dispersion of the human family. The mountains were sought for shelter in the time of danger, the river-basins for support in the time of want. The high places of the earth and the munitions of the rocks have been the strongholds of robber chieftains and the hiding-places of fugitives. But great cities have been planted beside the great waters, and the wealth of nations has been drawn from the running streams. We must turn to the rivers when we would read the fate of men and empires. The great march of events in the world's history has been along the banks of mighty streams. Whoever would trace the course of Divine Providence in the life of nations must often go to the banks of the Nile, the Euphrates, the Indus, the Ganges, the Rhine, the Danube and the Po, and the lesser but more famous streams of the Jordan, the Tiber, the Rubicon and the Granicus, the Seine and the Thames.

Heathen nations have worshiped rivers as divine, and in the Bible itself so many great events and symbolical truths are associated with rivers as to give them a peculiar sacredness in the minds of all students of the Holy Word. The home of the first human pair, the scene of the sad event which has overruled the history of the whole world, was upon the banks of a great

river. The beauty of the foliage and the fragrance of the flowers which adorned the walks of Paradise came from the fourfold river that went out of Eden to water the garden. The division of the human family into different languages and nations, and their dispersion over all the continents of the earth, began on the banks of the same great river. Abraham was called to leave the upper waters of the same historic stream, and go a journey of hundreds of miles into a strange land and among a hostile people, to found a nation which should be as the stars of heaven for multitude, and in which all the other nations of the earth should be blessed. The beginning of a new growth for the world, the new seed-corn whose harvests should fill the earth, was taken from the fountains of the great river on whose banks the tree of life was planted in Paradise.

On the banks of the same stream the wretched captives of Israel hung their harps upon the willows, and wept as they remembered the desolations of their beloved Zion. The wail which they poured to the breeze as they sat by the waters of Babylon has been the sacred song of captives and exiles in all time. At the great imperial cities on the Tigris and Euphrates, Ezekiel and Daniel saw visions of God in which the students of prophecy are still reading the future history of the nations and the destiny of the world. Moses began the great emigration of Israel, and the gathering of a people with the first written constitution in the world, on the banks of the Nile, and the wanderings of

forty years terminated with the passage of the Jordan. And since that time, in all sacred literature, death is described as the crossing of a river, and to gain a happy entrance into the blessed land is to pass over Jordan.

It was in a lonely defile beside the river Jabbok that the patriarch Jacob wrestled all night with the angel, and so established an argument for perseverance in prayer for all succeeding time. Everywhere the strong souls who plead with God and prevail go back to the dark night of Peniel, and they gather courage from the roaring voice of the mountain stream to say to the Angel of the Covenant, "I will not let thee go except thou bless me." The brook Cherith was the hiding-place of the prophet Elijah when he had prayed that the people of Israel might be recovered from idolatry by the terrible chastisement of drought and famine, and the wrath of Ahab was kindled for the destruction of the servant of Jehovah. When the years of famine had done their work, the apostate king and the tribes of Israel were gathered to the river Kishon under the brow of Carmel. There the fire of the Lord came down from heaven and kindled the sacrifice, in answer to the prayer of Elijah. There the prophets of the false god were slain and hurled into the rushing stream. There, the first time in three years and a half, the clouds gathered and poured down rain upon the famished earth. When the mighty prophet had completed his work, and he was about to be taken up to heaven with the dazzling escort of chariots of fire

and horses of fire, he went down to the Jordan and smote the stream with his mantle, and the waters divided, so that he and Elisha passed over on dry ground. And again, at the stroke of the same mantle, the waters parted for Elisha to return. So three times the sacred stream obeyed the voice which cried unto it in the name of Jehovah, and yielded a dry path for the servants of God to pass over.

The leprosy of Naaman the Syrian was washed away in the waters of the same stream. The incarnate Redeemer came to its sacred banks to be baptized, although his pure soul had no sins to wash away. For eighteen hundred years the channel of the stream has been filled and flowing with fresh rains from heaven and melted snows from Hermon, and yet millions cannot be persuaded to believe that in all the earth there is another river so sacred as that in which the Son of God bowed himself to the baptism of John.

It was by the same stream that Jesus received the divine confirmation of his mission in a voice from heaven, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased." The Sea of Galilee, every wave of which is consecrated with memorials of the Saviour's life, is only an expansion of the river Jordan. The brook Kidron, swollen by the latter rains of spring, mingled its midnight murmurs with the prayer of Jesus when the agony of Gethsemane was upon him. He passed over the same little stream in his last walk with his disciples, both before his cruci-

fixion and after his resurrection. And in the last glorious vision of divine revelation, we see the crowned and conquering King worshiped by the hosts of heaven, and a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, flowing from his throne, and the nations of the saved walking on its banks.

Thus the geographical importance accorded to rivers in the great system of Nature, the religious reverence bestowed upon rivers among heathen nations, and the many miracles of divine power and special revelation connected with rivers in the book of God, supply a threefold reason for studying the great streams of the earth and learning the sacred lessons which they are set forth to teach in the inspired Word. These three circumstances unite to give meaning and beauty to the divine promise, that the children of men shall drink of the river of God's pleasures. Surely there can be no greater bliss for man on earth or in heaven than to depend for happiness upon the source which is sufficient for the infinite God.

The original home of man in his perfect state was named Eden—a place of pleasures, a garden of delights. And the garden which was given to the sinless pair was watered by a river. The lost Paradise shall therefore be restored when man is permitted to drink again of the river of God's Eden—the river of God's pleasures. It will be a return to the lost delights of that holy and happy state when man heard the voice of God walking in the garden. Then shall be given free

access to the tree which grows upon the banks of the river of life, and whose leaves are for the healing of the nations.

What is pleasure, as we find it in the severe study, the hard toil or the heated chase of a worldly life? It is a beautiful flower that fades before it is blown; a dazzling meteor that vanishes before its place can be found; a strain of music that begins with joy and ends in woe; a promise that is made to the hope and broken to the heart; a dream that gives us all our desire for a moment, and leaves us to wake and weep that the vision can never become a reality. The most fortunate men that have ever lived—kings and conquerors that have ridden upon the topmost wave of success; poets, artists, orators that have had the envy and applause of nations; millionaires with possessions greater than they have ever counted—have expressed the most bitter and intense dissatisfaction with worldly pleasure. One great king, in reviewing a long life of glory and conquest, thought he could find two happy days. One great author, who was worshiped as a very demigod by his countrymen, and who always seemed to others supremely satisfied with himself, confessed that in eighty years he had not found a week of pleasure. One great poet, "who touched his harp and nations heard entranced," could not find terms strong enough to denounce and curse every day of his life. One great diplomatist, who passed through the most terrible and complicated revolutions, and always kept himself on

the winning side, said, in summing up the results of his long life, that he could find nothing to approve in the past and nothing to hope for in the future.

So uncertain, so unsatisfactory is the pleasure which men find when they have not learned to drink from the river of God's Eden. The abundance of his pleasures is sufficient to supply every human want, whether we speak of the blessedness which God himself enjoys, or that which he is able to give; in either case it is infinite and can answer the necessities of all souls. He is ever able and willing to do for us exceeding abundantly above all that we can ask or think. We have only to ask and we shall be filled with all the fullness of God. It is utterly impossible for an impoverished and praying world to exhaust the abundance of the divine blessings. The discoveries and inventions of modern times have greatly increased the powers and resources of the human family. Common men can now easily do what the greatest kings and conquerors of old would not have dared to attempt. And yet this most advanced age has not learned how much of everything may be had by asking of God.

All times and seasons, all trials and afflictions, all honors and successes, all peace and safety, all joy and triumph, are in God's hand, and he can control them all for the good of his children with infinite ease. It is our wisdom to believe ourselves permitted and encouraged to ask anything and everything of him, with the single reserve of submission to his wiser and better will.

Are you poor? Ask your heavenly Father, and he will either give you riches or make poverty a greater blessing. Are you sick? Ask God, and he will either grant you recovery, or give you reason to praise him for ever for every pang you suffer. Are you embarrassed and perplexed in your worldly affairs? Ask God, and he will either deliver you from trouble, or make it the means of bringing peace and joy into your soul. Are you in want of anything? Go to your best Friend, pour out the full tale of your sorrows into his attentive ear, and be not afraid to believe that he will give you to drink of the infinite river of his own pleasures.

It is the greatest discovery that a man ever makes in the longest life of study, experiment and prayer that the infinite and exhaustless sources of gratitude, contentment and peace are all open and accessible to him every moment. If he owned millions of acres, and on every acre were springs pouring forth rivers of oil, and through all his domain were streams rolling down golden sands, he could not be as rich as he is in the permission to drink to the full and drink for ever from the river of God's pleasures. This is easily said. If we believed it with all our heart, we could go forth to the toil of each successive day as happy as if we were walking the streets that are paved with gold, or straying in company with angels along the banks of the river that flows through the Paradise of God. We do not know, the mind of man has never conceived, how much of heaven the fullest exercise of faith

can bring down to earth. We do not know, we are afraid to believe it when told, how little difference it makes to any man where he is, or what he is in his worldly relations, if only his heart, his soul be filled with all the fullness of God.

Such is the abundance of the river of God's pleasures. And that mighty stream flows along every man's path, beside every man's door. It pours its healing flood into every man's home. The journey of every man's life lies along its banks. The refreshing waters go forth from every page of the divine word, from every house of Christian worship, from every act of Christian duty, from every call to a holy life. The great art of happy living is to learn to drink from that river—to be satisfied with such blessedness as belongs to the infinite God.

I know something of the life of a man who is often named as the most distinguished philosopher of the nineteenth century. He slept but four hours out of twenty-four, and he lived ninety years. Never sick, never idle, never weary, he traveled and read and wrote and studied enough to wear out half a dozen ordinary men. He learned many languages. He was familiar with every department of science. He explored vast libraries. He knew the scientific men of all nations. He received a hundred thousand letters. Princes and kings delighted to do him honor. Titles and diplomas, degrees and badges of distinction were scattered like rubbish about his room. Ministers of

state, generals in the army, officers of kingly courts, professors of colleges, travelers, academicians, students, citizens, all counted it a privilege to have seen his face, an honor to have known him. And that man, with his unwearied and wonderful mind, ranged through all the departments of nature, science, literature, philosophy, and found no God, no Saviour, no heaven, no promise or prospect of everlasting life. With all his discoveries he never found the river of God's pleasures.

I know something of the life of another man, who was not permitted even to own himself. He lived and labored and suffered for another man's profit, for another man's pleasure. The value of his life was estimated as men estimate the value of farms and merchandise. The creations of art, the stores of literature, the wonders of science, the refinements of taste, the rewards of industry, the stimulus of intellectual cultivation, the charms of home, the delights of peace and liberty, were not for him. And yet that poor man had such pleasures as belong to the infinite God. He had expectations that overpassed the boundaries of earth and time. He could read his title clear to mansions in the skies. He looked upon the whole realm of nature as the possession of his Father, and the whole infinite blessedness of an everlasting life as the portion given him in his Father's will. He could alleviate the weary toils and the dark hours of earthly bondage by sweet anticipations of eternal rest. He did not complain of wrong—he did not mourn over his hard lot. He

knew it would soon be over; and, last as long as it might, he knew that the toil and affliction of earth could only increase the preciousness of the final rest.

Which of these two men, think you, had found out the great secret of happy living, the philosopher or the slave? Which had formed the truest estimate of the value of life? Which had most reason to be satisfied with the fruit of all his labor under the sun—the one whom kings delighted to honor and whom philosophers acknowledged as their master, or the one whom nobody honored, and who was not permitted to be even his own master? Which of the two could best direct the weary and the thirsty to the river of God's pleasures?

I have stood beside a mountain stream when it was swollen by the melting snows and the abundant rains of spring. The turbid flood rushed by with maddening and impetuous speed. Trees were uptorn and whirled down the foaming torrent. Vast rocks were loosened from their ancient bed and moved out of their place. High banks were undermined and new channels formed, through which the wild waters rushed in devastating fury over farms and fields and domestic gardens. Flocks were carried away, bridges and highways destroyed, the dwellings of men endangered by the ruthless flood. Again I stood on the same bank in midsummer, when the parched fields had most need to be refreshed by living streams from the mountains. A shallow and long-extended channel of gray rocks and drifted gravel and white sand lay before me, but there

was no water. The hot sun shot his fiercest beams through the glimmering air, and my feet were burned by the heated stones, as I walked in the dry bed of the stream, as if I had been climbing the crater of a volcano.

And I said, This inconstant and wasteful river is a fit emblem of the brief and blasting pleasures of appetite and passion. In the mad hours of excitement and self-indulgence they sweep through the soul like a mountain torrent, carrying away all the barriers of reason and conscience, overturning all the beacon-lights of experience and undermining all the foundations of good habits and virtuous resolutions. The whole man is swept along by the torrent of passion, pleasure, self-indulgence, temptation. For a time he is wild with joy, with pride, with hope, with success. But when the flood of worldly triumph has run its course and subsided, as it soon must, and the season of trial comes, the secret springs of the soul are all dried up. It can show nothing but blight and ruin where the wild and wasteful torrent of passion, pride and worldliness swept through. It can only writhe and groan under the burning heat of adversity, and long for the flood of some new excitement to come in and cover the desolation which the former made.

I have stood on the banks of a full, strong and mighty river, and I have seen it flowing on in its self-dependent greatness and constancy through all seasons of the year, calm and serene, yet resistless in force,

keeping ever within its banks, and yet breaking through the barrier of the everlasting mountains in its course. I have seen such a river in summer and in winter, in storm and in sunshine, always the same. The heat could not dry it up, the ice could not fetter its march, the floods could not excite its current to passionate haste, the thirsty soil could not exhaust its fullness. On it moved evermore in the majesty of strength and the beauty of beneficence, bearing great burdens without weariness, enriching millions without exhaustion, carrying life and health and abundance wherever it flowed.

And I thought, Such is the river of God's pleasures by which every humble and believing soul is refreshed—of which all the thirsty are permitted to drink. God's pleasures give peace and strength. They never weary with excitement or inflame with passion. They come from sources that are exhaustless and unchanging like the infinite God. They never blast and destroy, like the wild floods and whirlpools of earthly passion. If you would be calm in the midst of agitation; if you would be strong when men's hearts are failing them for fear; if you would be cheerful and light-hearted in the midst of losses and afflictions and disappointments, —satisfy the thirst of your soul day by day from the river of God's pleasures. Learn by decisive experiment the great art of drawing happiness from the same source with the infinite God. Open the floodgates of your heart that the river of God's pleasures may flow in.

The fountains of the river Nile are far away among the highlands of Central Africa. They are filled by the rains of heaven falling upon mountains that the inhabitants of Egypt have never seen, and adventurous travelers have been seeking for centuries without finding. But when the streams and tributaries are all full, and the mighty river is once formed, it flows on for a thousand miles without receiving a single tributary, carrying life and fertility through a country which without the Nile would be a waste of sand. The green belt of gardens and fertile fields, extending through the desert thirteen hundred miles from Nubia to the Mediterranean, is all made by one river, whose strength to cross and fertilize the waste is hidden far away in fountains that have been conjectured, but never found. It has long been thought an inexplicable wonder that a river can roll so far over a thirsty desert, receiving no tributary, increased by no rains, diffusing life and fertility all the way, and yet not be dried up.

This wonder in the natural world is infinitely surpassed by that river of God's pleasures which has its fountain in the eternal throne and which flows forth to fill the universe with blessing. Whoever drinks till his soul is thoroughly filled from that gladdening stream, can go through all the waste places of the earth diffusing life and blessing wherever he goes. He grows richer in his own heart by giving to others. He finds his own happiness in making others happy. The daily life of a good man is a fountain which en-

riches and refreshes all that come near. It is only because the love of Christ has opened such fountains in many hearts that the world is not dried up to a desert. If it were not for the streams of light and salvation which the gospel pours through all our borders, every city in America would become a Sodom, and the groves and green hills of the open country would become like the high places of Baal for the offering of human sacrifice and the abominations of the heathen worship.

The traveler who ascends the tower of the Capitol in modern Rome, and surveys the scene where the mistress of the ancient world sat throned upon her seven hills, is sure to have his attention arrested by the long lines of broken arches striding across the melancholy Campagna and deepening the aspect of desolation which rests on everything outside the walls. And he learns that those long ranges of crumbling stone are the remains of aqueducts that brought water in living streams from the distant hills to the capital of the world's great empire. Sixty miles away were the fountains from which the millions of the mighty city drank in the day of her pride and power. Now the streams have been cut off, and Rome, in comparison with her former greatness, is a desert. And her desolation has come not so much because the water from the hills has ceased to flow along the broken arches, as because the river of God's word is no longer free to flow through all her streets. Let the blessed stream of the

divine word come freely in through all her gates, and she shall rise from her ruins and rebuild her waste places with a beauty and splendor surpassing her highest glory in ancient time.

And this river of salvation is destined to flow over all the earth, and everything shall live where the river cometh. The flowers shall put on a new beauty, the trees and vines shall bend with more luscious fruit, the fields shall wave with more abundant harvests, the ships of commerce shall bring richer products from distant lands, the people shall be clothed with more beautiful fabrics, houses shall be furnished with more to minister to comfort and taste, all skies shall be more genial, all climates more healthful, all occupations shall be more pleasing and profitable, the dew shall fall on the desert and the rain shall fertilize the waste places of the wilderness, in that glad time when the river of salvation flows through all the earth. There shall be fidelity in friendship and justice in trade, kindness on the lip and love in the heart, truthfulness and courtesy in the intercourse of society, happiness and purity in private life. Children shall honor their parents, and parents shall be blessed in their children; every house shall be a sanctuary, every human talent and possession shall be an offering, every soul a living temple unto the Lord, in that blessed day when all the nations shall learn to drink of the river of God's pleasures.

If we take the guidance of the offered Hand, w

have only one deep and dread river to pass over, and our journey will end in triumph and repose. We shall walk without weariness upon the banks of the river of life, whose waters, clear as crystal, flow forth from the throne of God. With the light of heaven round us and the nations of the saved for our companions, it will be unspeakable happiness to remember that fountains opened by us are still sending forth living waters on earth and inviting the thirsty to drink. It will increase the blessedness of heaven itself if even there we can welcome others coming up from earth and finding us out, to tell us that some word of ours drew them to drink of the river of God's pleasures. Let this then be the comfort of the weary: We shall reach our Father's house and rest in glory for ever. Our Father's house with its many mansions, the throne of Jesus with the surrounding hosts of saints and seraphim, the sea of glass covered with the conquerors of death and waving in billows of melody responsive to the harps of God and the song of the Lamb, the golden streets and the sapphire wall and the trees of life, and the blessed company clothed in white, are all waiting for us beyond the river.

The Precious Things of the Hills

Blessed of the Lord be his land, for the precious things of the lasting hills.—DEUT. xxxiii. 13, 15.

J. JOHN J. R. RICE

THE LAST LOOK OF THE HILLS.

XVI.

THE PRECIOUS THINGS OF THE HILLS.

AMONG the crowning excellences of the lot of Ephraim and Manasseh, Moses named the chief things of the ancient mountains and the precious things of the lasting hills. In the last solemn and prophetic words which he addressed to the tribes of Israel, he dwelt with peculiar earnestness of feeling and beauty of expression upon the precious things of the lasting hills. He had many times before raised the expectations of the weary and foot-worn wanderers of the desert by describing their promised inheritance as a land of hills and valleys, a land that drinketh water of the rain of heaven, a land on which the eyes of the Lord God rests for good through all the year.

To a people who had lived upon the dead level of Egypt, and had wandered forty years up and down the deserts of Arabia, the sunny hills and green pastures of Palestine must have seemed in the distant prospect like an earthly Paradise. All great and noble spirits among men have felt a peculiar joy in the hills. And those who have spent their early years

upon the monotonous plain have turned with a still more passionate and sacred longing to the high places of the earth. The most lofty and inspiring descriptions of Nature among mountains have come from men who in early life longed for the hills as we long for the land that eye hath not seen. The aged leader of the tribes must have had this longing with such an intense and sacred passion as to mingle the hills of Palestine and those of the better country in his excited imagination. And to gratify that feeling, permission was given him, as a last earthly favor, to go up to the top of Pisgah and survey the beautiful land which awaited its new possessors beyond the Jordan. It is certainly a notable circumstance that to this most honored servant of God in ancient times, permission to climb a high mountain and gaze upon a wide and beautiful landscape was given as a sacramental preparation for death. Let mountain-climbers remember the last scene in the life of Moses, and they will look forth upon the landscape with feelings of reverence and solemn worship when they stand on the high places of the earth.

The forty-years' march of the wilderness was ended; the camps of the gathered host were pitched for the last time under their great leader's eye. For a whole generation the burden of a great people had been laid upon him; he had carried them in his bosom as a tender father carries an infant child. At times he had been so afflicted and discouraged by their murmurings and sorrows as to beg of God as a favor that he might die

at once and not live to see his own wretchedness. But now the pathways of the desert were all passed over. The terrible chastisements of plague and poisonous serpents and avenging fire were ended. The exultant tribes were just about to set forth upon their triumphal march into the land of promise. In full view before them were wooded hills and grassy plains, seeming the more beautiful and inviting to them because they had wandered a whole lifetime in the howling waste of Arabian deserts. Just now the one man who has suffered everything for their sake, and has even prayed that his own name might be blotted from God's book of life if they cannot be saved—even he is commanded to turn away his face from his beloved people, and go up into a solitary mountain and die there alone. Though the meekest of all men on the earth, Moses had given way to provocation and had trespassed against the Lord at the waters of Meribah, and therefore he must not be permitted to go in unto the land which the Lord had given to Israel. This instance of seeming severity in God's dealings with his most honored servant must stand in everlasting memorial upon the sacred page, that others may not give way to temptation and shut themselves out from the Better Land.

Turning slowly and sadly from the sacred tabernacle over which the pillar of cloud hovered, and in which he had so many times conversed with Jehovah face to face as a man talks with his friend—turning from the goodly tents of Jacob, which were spread forth upon

the plain, like gardens by the river-side—he sets his face toward the mountains and begins to climb the steep ascent of Nebo to find the place of his death. An old man, a hundred and twenty years of age, leaves behind him the people whom he has loved with a love stronger than death, and he goes away into the solitude of the uninhabited heights to die alone. No friendly hand shall smooth the pillow for him to lie down to his last sleep. No human face shall bend over him with its look of sympathy. No human voice shall whisper words of peace and comfort to cheer him in his departure. The chiefs and elders of the tribes shall not be permitted to come and tell him how dear he had ever been to their hearts, notwithstanding all their murmurings and rebellions. No loving eyes shall weep when death casts its pale shadow upon his aged brow. The weeping and mourning of his desolate people shall be far away in the distant plains while he sleeps in his unknown grave, and no one shall ever be permitted to shed a tear or raise a memorial stone upon the place of his burial.

Slowly, step by step, he climbs the stony mountain-path, now hiding himself in the shadow of deep ravines, and now coming out upon a projecting crag and looking down with longing eyes upon the great encampment of his people in the plain below. He would gladly bear all their murmurings and share all their conflicts, if he might go over Jordan with them and possess the goodly land beyond. Many a time and with deep

earnestness has he besought the Lord that this joy might be given to crown his long life of suffering and toil. But no, it must not be. There is no forgetting, no resisting the stern command—"Get thee up into this mountain and die."

As a last and peculiar favor, when he reaches the utmost height, he is permitted to behold the land afar, in its utmost extent of hills and valleys, wild forests and fertilizing streams. Northward the range of snow-shining Hermon hangs like a white cloud in the sky. And there is the vision of beauty and verdure which the meek old man had longed and prayed with a child's fondness of desire to behold—there is Lebanon, the goodly mountain, clothed in its royal robe of purple cedars, and sending forth the life-giving tribute of perpetual streams. The oak groves and the table-lands of Gilead and Tabor and Gilboa and Little Hermon, and the sunny hills of Galilee rise in the nearer prospect, and far away, westward to the utmost sea, extends the excellency of Carmel, the teeming plain of Megiddo and the rose-crowned beauty of Sharon. Right beneath him, Jericho sits like a queen beneath her canopy of feathery palms, and just beyond, sharply defined in the clear air, rise the heights of Olivet and Bethlehem and Hebron, and the rocky shoulder of Moriah just seen through the parted hills. Southward, lying deep between its melancholy shores, the Sea of Death spreads its steel-bright waves in the morning sun, and the blasted plain of Sodom appears to heighten the beauty

of the living landscape everywhere else rising to view.

On all these things Moses gazed with undimmed and enraptured eye, while the Lord showed them unto him for the satisfaction of his longing heart before he laid down on the rocky height of Nebo to die in silence and alone. It means much that the infinite God, in conferring a last and especial favor upon his most honored servant, should have displayed before him the fair sight of a land of hills and valleys, drinking water of the rain of heaven and basking beneath the smile of its Creator from the beginning to the end of the year.

The hills of Palestine, so beautiful in the eyes of Moses, and the last sight that he looked upon with enraptured gaze before his death, are but the type of the ten thousand hills which God has clothed with beauty, and in which he has stored up precious things from of old for man throughout all the earth. The sacred associations of Palestine cannot indeed be repeated in other lands. But the hills of America are as truly God's work, and both piety and patriotism conspire to make us look upon them with such feelings as moved the heart of Moses when gazing upon the promised possessions of his people from the height of Nebo.

The precious things of the lasting hills—would you know how rich, how various, how beautiful they are? Take the wings of the morning in the autumn of the year, and travel in the flying train, in any direction

over the rolling expanse of our hill country, till the setting sun finds you farther away from the place of starting than the whole length of the land that Moses saw from Nebo; and all the way you are climbing the slope of streams whose fountains are still beyond you when the stars appear. The long journey of the day will be a continued panorama, more rich and varied in beauty than any that the great masters in painting ever spread upon the canvas.

In that one day's journey God will show you a grander prospect than he showed to Moses from the top of Nebo. If you look upon it with such reverence and gratitude as God's great works should ever draw forth from the heart, it will be to you a day of worship as sacred as that which you offer in sanctuaries made by human hands. Hills and valleys, fields and forests, rocks and streams, villages and farm-houses will float by in the brightness of the sunlight and under the shadows of clouds, until your eye is weary with beholding and the mind is surfeited with beauty. You will see the slopes of the hills lifted up to hang the flaming hues of the forest in the clearest light; the waving lines of the ridges and valleys will soften the transition from one view to another, and the russet hues of the harvest-fields will tone down the picture with such a delicate blending of light and shade as we see when the dawn imperceptibly brightens into day or the twilight deepens into night. As you pass swiftly along, even the borders of the fields and the neglected pas-

ture-lands look like flower-gardens, bright with starry asters and golden-rods and sumacs and humble shrubs, whose foliage seems an efflorescence of fire, burning yet unconsumed. Farther away in the distance, the forests of oak and maple, of birch and beech and evergreen pine present, in harmonious combination, all tints that shine in the rainbow, subdued and beautified by the dreamy haze of the autumnal air.

This varied and dazzling beauty is one of the precious things of the lasting hills which God has given to this land as a peculiar blessing. The inheritance of Ephraim and Manasseh in old time was never clothed with such gorgeous colors as God gives to our American hills, when the forests flame out in every leaf and the autumn winds begin their mournful song. You have only to recognize the Divine Hand in all this wilderness of beauty, and you will feel that a day of travel among the hills and along the winding streams in the autumn of the year is like the march of the tribes when the cloudy pillar of God's presence went before them, or like the journeys of the patriarchs when they met angels in the broad noon or saw visions of Jehovah in the dreams of the night.

Blessed, a thousand times blessed, be the name of our God, because he has made this world so beautiful that the hills and clouds and forests of earth can help us conceive the more glorious beauty of that land where the light is never dim and the living never die! Take

away the sin and the sorrow, the suffering and the death from this world, and we should have enough of beauty and riches and blessing left to make it seem our heaven. But now that sin abounds and the beauty fades, and even the good must die, we have nothing left but to look for another and a better country. We should therefore take everything that God has made for us here, to attract the eye and delight the mind, as the sign of something richer and fairer in the blessed and final home. And all the pleasure we derive from the contemplation of beauty in the material and perishing world should make us long more earnestly for the perfect and everlasting beauty of holiness.

Among the precious things of the lasting hills we may count the light which sheds its radiance upon us in the evening hours, and the warmth which cheers our homes when icy winter reigns through all the frozen north. The veins and beds of coal and the springs of oil which make our dwellings habitable, and keep all the fires of industry burning, were prepared in far-distant time against the day of need and entrusted to the safe-keeping of the lasting hills. Down deep in the treasuries of the ancient hills God laid up of old, in black and solid mass, the bright effulgence which plays on the evening circle and kindles the classic page for the student's eye at the midnight hour.

In long-gone ages God made the mighty forests grow. He poured the sunshine upon the green leaves that every branch might treasure up a portion of em-

bodied light. He sent forth great water-floods to sweep the fallen trunks of millions of trees into ravines and valleys between the hills. He covered them over and pressed them down with masses of sand and earth. He hardened the covering into stone that the storehouse might not be broken open till the time of need. In the process of ages the beneficent and divine Builder set his own hand beneath the hills and heaved up the rocky door. He opened the treasuries of darkness and the hidden riches of secret places, where light and warmth have been stored away in solid masses among the precious things of the lasting hills. Then the voice of his providence said to man, Behold the storehouse which thy Father's hand hath prepared and filled of old for thee! Enter and possess thine own. And when the treasures of darkness fill thy homes and sanctuaries with light by night and warmth in winter, then offer thanksgiving to Him who thought of thee and provided for thy wants so long before the time of need came.

Moses promised that the Lord God would bring the tribes of Israel into a land whose stones were iron. Speaking by divine inspiration, he recognized the mineral treasures of the earth as the means of spiritual blessing to man. And the coal and iron are among the most precious things which God hath stored up for us in the treasuries of the hills. More precious than fine gold and sparkling gems are the black coal and rusty iron that grime the face of the laborer with soot and

sweat, and leave the signs of toil upon every hand that touches them. They keep all the wheels and hammers of industry in motion. They feed the hungry and clothe the naked and comfort the afflicted. They build houses for the homeless, they supply occupation for the idle, they reward the industrious for their labor. They bridge our streams, build highways for travel, transport men and merchandise over land and sea with the speed of the wind and with the power of countless horses. They move the mightiest masses and they finish the most delicate work. They hang the giddy track for the rushing train on the face of the mountain, and they stretch the connecting thread under all the waters of the great deep from continent to continent. They print our Bibles, give voice and melody to our songs of praise and supply every comfort and convenience of public worship. If it were not for the treasures of coal and iron stored up of old by God's hand in the ancient hills, the grand march of science and social improvement, of civilization and Christianity, would be arrested, and the nations would go back to a state of utter ignorance and barbarism.

Moses promised that the Lord God would bring the tribes of Israel to a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills. He counted it a reason for national gratitude, and he solemnly charged them to keep it as such in their hearts, that living streams should break forth and gushing rivulets should sing down the terraced slopes of

their hillsides and along the winding course of their valleys.

So rich are our own hills with springs and fountains that we forget the Hand that pours them forth. Let our land be parched with drought for a single summer, and all hearts would be lifted in one agonizing prayer for God to touch the hills and make them smoke with rain-clouds, and send forth springs into the valleys. And it is good for us always to remember how much we are indebted to the precious things of the lasting hills for the varied hues and forms that make the world beautiful, for the daily bread which we ask of God to sustain life, for the strength that nerves our arms and for the hope and courage that inspire our hearts. It was the resolve of ancient faith in the time of trouble, "I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help." And then, as if the Maker of the hills had given them for the defence and consolation of the afflicted, the inspired prayer makes their help the same as his: "My help cometh from the Lord, which made heaven and earth."

In the lowest depths of affliction and sorrow we have only to look away to the everlasting heights of God's mercy and power, and his hand will be put forth to lift us up. When we want light or guidance, we must look up. The sailor finds his way on the sea by watching the stars. The benighted traveler, who longs for the day, looks for the bright herald of the dawn on the hilltops while the skies are still dark. The Alpine hunter,

whose head grows giddy in climbing mountain heights, looks up and is calm.

If you keep your eye always on the earth, you will walk in darkness and stumble at every step. Look up to heaven and God, and you will find your way safely wherever duty calls you to go. If you lay up for yourself treasures only on earth, you will be poor with all your gains. If you lay up treasures in heaven, you will be rich with all your losses. If you look only to man for comfort in the day of need, you will be helpless and desolate with all your friends. If you have God for your Father, you can hope and rejoice though every human friend should forsake you.

These earthly and perishable things, which engage so much of our attention now, are appointed to help us lay hold on things heavenly and divine. Man is nothing without God; earth is nothing without heaven. Man alone, of all God's works in this world, was made to walk erect, that he might look up. Into him alone did the breath of the Almighty breathe desires and aspirations that overpass the boundaries of earth and time. If you would be true to your own immortal nature, you must spend this life of earth in preparing for a higher and a better; you must not let the animal and perishable nature subdue and enslave the spiritual and immortal.

Rich and great and beautiful as is this world, it is only one small province of the kingdom which our Father would give us for our inheritance and enjoy-

ment beyond the river of death. All the worth and greatness of this life are derived from its connection with the endless life to come. The precious things of the lasting hills shall perish, the mountains decay with years. The mightiest structures of man's art shall pass away and leave not a wreck behind. But the soul that lives for God here, shall be blessed for ever with God hereafter. The tree of life shall yield all its fruits, the hills of heaven shall pour forth all their fountains of joy, the city of God shall fling wide the golden gates, the harps and voices of innumerable angels shall be lifted up in songs of welcome for him who while on earth learns to look up for help, for guidance and for hope. As the rocks of the shore gird the sea, as the hills and mountains are round about the valleys, so shall God's everlasting arm surround and protect the feeblest soul that seeks his aid. You have only to ask and trust his help in life and in death, and he will say to you in the sure word of promise and of prophecy: "The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith the Lord that hath mercy on thee."

The Balancings of the Clouds.

Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?—JOB xxxvii. 16.

DORE DOUGAL

THE VOICE OUT OF THE CLOUDS

XVII.

THE BALANCINGS OF THE CLOUDS.

CLOUDS are among the most striking appearances in the natural world. Whether heralding the dawn with beacons of flame and banners of gold, or escorting the sun's descending car with armies of light and sapphire thrones; whether clothing the mountains with garments of beauty, or enriching the landscape with flying shadows; whether shading the weary from the noonday heat, refreshing the field and the garden with gentle showers, or shaking the earth with mighty thunders; whether moving in silent and solitary grandeur along the blue deep of the sky, or covering the whole heavens with black and jagged masses, torn by the tempest and hurled onward like charging hosts in the shock of battle,—glorious in the morning, grateful at noonday, prophetic of the dawn at evening, clouds lend a charm to every landscape, a diversity to every season and a lesson to every thoughtful mind. No earthly scene could attract us long if deprived of light and shade from the changing clouds, and with our present feelings we should find it hard to be satisfied with heaven itself if it be one unvaried, cloudless noon.

It is doubtless for this reason that clouds so frequently form a part of the symbolical representations by which the Creator of the heavens and the earth reveals himself to man. When the waters of the Flood passed away from the earth, and God covenanted with every living creature to repeat the judgment of the Deluge no more for perpetual generations, he pointed to the bow in the cloud for the seal of his covenant, and he emblazoned his promise in the seven-fold colors of the showery arch. When the hosts of Israel came out of Egypt, and began their march to the Promised Land through the waves of the divided sea, the Lord went before them for a guide and a defence in a pillar of cloud. The same awful symbol of Jehovah's presence was a light to his people and darkness to their foes. When the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai to proclaim his fiery law amid mighty thunderings and lightnings and the sound of a trumpet exceeding loud, he veiled his presence from the witnessing tribes in a thick cloud. When the tabernacle was set up in the wilderness, and God would give a token of his willingness to hear the prayer of the penitent and to dwell with the humble and contrite, he caused a cloud to appear between the cherubim that covered the mercy-seat with their outspreading wings, and he spoke with oracular voices from that awful shadow.

The Psalmist, in describing the majesty of Jehovah who laid the foundations of the earth and spread out the heavens like a curtain, says that he maketh the

clouds his chariot. The voice which proclaimed the Son of God on the Mount of the Transfiguration came out from the cloud which covered the excellent glory. When the great work of man's redemption was accomplished, and the Conqueror of sin and death ascended to his heavenly throne in view of his wondering disciples, a cloud received him out of their sight. And in the last great day, when he shall return for judgment, and shall gather all nations before him, and every eye shall see him, he shall come upon the clouds.

The voices of the mercy-seat are no longer heard as of old from the awful shadow of the tabernacle. The visible presence of the Son of God no longer walks with men below. And yet the bow of promise still spans the summer cloud; the chariots of Jehovah still sweep the sky; the heavens are covered with the dust of his feet. There is still abundant reason why we should make a sacred study of the clouds.

There were some in ancient time who thought it strange that they could not find out the ways of the Almighty unto perfection. To silence such presumption, he put the question, "Dost thou know the balancings of the clouds?" He referred to objects which are familiar to every eye, which come within the range of every day's observation. And the force of the rebuke was this: If you cannot explain things that are so common and apparently so simple, why need you wonder or complain that you cannot understand

the plans and the purposes of a government which embraces all beings and extends through everlasting ages?

This question about the balancings of the clouds has now been before the world more than three thousand years. Men have been studying and growing in knowledge all the time. But nobody has yet been found able to answer it either among shepherds, like Job, who are as familiar with clouds as with their flocks on the mountains, or among philosophers, who study vapors and stormy winds in laboratories and upon housetops. The latest authority among men of science says that little is known of the causes which balance the clouds in the air.

They are formed of water, and water, however minutely divided or blown into bubbles, is always heavier than the air. And yet these flying fountains of all the rivers of earth, these armed and thundering legions of the storm, that beat down the forests with hail and bury the mountains in snow, and flood the plains with water, go floating over us at vast heights with all their mighty magazines when all our philosophy would require them to sink to the earth. Why they do not come down at once, rending the barriers of the mountains and desolating the plains with another deluge, nobody knows. It is a sign of progress in knowledge that men have discovered their ignorance. And it takes a wise man to tell us in what direction our ignorance is most profound.

The writer of the book of Job must have been guided by something higher than human wisdom to have been able to ask in his day the one question which is still hardest to answer about the clouds. He might have asked a hundred others which are easy for us, but which nobody could answer in his time. He needed divine inspiration to ask the one which the world, after three thousand years of study, still finds the hardest to answer. And this is not by accident, for it was the avowed purpose of the writer to show that in the most common things there are mysteries past finding out.

And this most ancient book of Job has another question about the clouds which our modern science finds nearly or quite as hard to answer: "Can any understand the spreadings of the clouds?" Look up on a summer's day and you may see whole square miles of sky "spread" with clouds, ranged like harp-strings in parallel bars, or scattered in handfuls of sea-foam, that preserve a definite form and fly in flocks like migratory birds, yet never interfering with each other.

Now philosophers tell us that clouds are formed when cold air comes into contact with warmer and condenses the moisture into vapor. The cloud shows where the cold is diffusing itself through the warm air and making its moisture visible. But who can tell me how cold or heat can range itself in orderly ranks in the thin air, and go marching above the mountains for

many a league across the sky, like battalions of armed men that never break their ranks, never forsake the standard under which they are marshaled? Can anybody understand how a million separate breaths of cold or warm air can be kept floating for miles at vast heights so as not to mingle with each other, as we have all seen the sky flecked with millions of clouds no bigger than the white wing of a sea bird, and every curled and twisted flake of mist moving upon its own track? Who can tell me how cold can rise up in towers and pinnacles and thrones, or stand like a wall of adamant with battlements of fire and foundations in the darkness, as we have all seen clouds hang for hours motionless in the western sky or gather in solid and shining legions around the setting sun.

These and many such questions about the clouds nobody can answer. And they are asked by divine inspiration not simply to perplex and confound us, but to show that in the common things of daily life there are mysteries past finding out, and that much more may we expect that the judgments and purposes of the infinite God will be unsearchable. He must come to us, if he reveals himself at all, in the thick cloud of mystery; he must conceal more of himself than he makes known. If we could fully understand his ways, we could not believe him to be the infinite God. He must be incomprehensible in wisdom and power and love, or we should not dare to trust him with the infinite interests of our souls for ever and ever.

It is the infinite folly of the skeptic to refuse to believe because he cannot comprehend the infinite. Every faculty of his mind, every organ of his body, every cloud in the sky, every particle of dust beneath his feet, contains mysteries which no human science by continued searching can ever find out. Our own existence and faculties and destiny are unfathomable mysteries. But they are all most real and undeniable facts. God's existence and character and requirements are still greater mysteries, but they are all still greater and more awful facts. And it is greater folly to deny or to neglect our responsibility to God because we cannot understand his ways, than it would be to deny our own existence because we cannot understand how we came into being or in what way our life is preserved.

It is by the dark and awful lesson of mystery that God would educate us all to the highest exercise of faith. He shows us the unsearchableness of his wisdom and power in the drop of rain, in the flake of snow, in the blade of grass, in all the little and common things around us, in order that he may help us to believe that he is everywhere, and that nothing is too small to receive his attention. He impresses us more deeply by what he does not and cannot make known of himself than by all that our limited understanding can comprehend.

If any increase of light, any enlargement of our faculties, should ever satisfy us that we had seen all that there is of God, and learned all he has done or

can do, we could no longer give him the homage of our hearts. We should feel like searching the universe to its utmost boundary to find one whom we could not comprehend, that we might worship him. Let this then be our answer to those who complain that the doctrines of divine revelation are mysterious and incomprehensible. They must be so, or they could not command our faith, they could not satisfy the longings of our souls that can never die. They must be unsearchable, or they cannot hold the supremacy in minds that can never cease to inquire, to think and to learn.

There is a cloud of mourning as well as of mystery. To those who will receive it, the mystery is the forerunner of light and the mourning is the messenger of joy. The Divine Comforter often sends the cloud of mourning as the sign of his coming. He promises especial blessing to those that mourn. If it were not so, it would be our sad lot to live without peace and to die without hope. For it is appointed unto man to mourn, and if there be no bow of promise in the cloud, the journey of life must be pursued in darkness and end in despair.

The cloud of mourning casts its shadow upon every path. It bursts with appalling blackness into the brightest sky, and it steals, with slow and silent approach, upon the fairest landscape. All languages are burdened with words of lamentation over the changing and transitory state of man. The great and the mighty are hurled from the high places of power as meteors

are hurled from the height of heaven, as the avalanche falls from its mountain home. The strong man, in the fullness of his strength and activity, feels a twinge of pain shoot across his brow or a shadow flit before his vision, and it is the summons for him to go home and die. To-day the little child shouts and sings for joy till the house rings with the music of his voice. At midnight there is a light in his chamber and anxious watchers are bending over his bed. To-morrow in the same room a broken-hearted mother bows down weeping and mourning beside a still, cold form that is stiffened and straightened for the grave. With many, life is a long conflict of pain and disappointment, hope is a bright cloud that brings no rain, joy is a fountain that springs up in the burning desert, but recedes when the thirsty approach to drink. In every heart there is some secret woe, in every house there is some hidden horror, in every cup of earthly pleasure there is bitterness, upon every path the cloud of mourning casts its shadow.

The eloquent and the mighty climb to the heights of fame and find them cold. The friend of the poor and the emancipator of millions falls by the hand of an assassin. Men of genius enrich the world with their inventions and themselves die poor. Men of wealth build splendid mansions and never inhabit them. Reformers preach righteousness and humanity, and they are hissed as fanatics and denounced as disturbers of the public peace. The clowns and the comedians who

live by making others laugh are themselves consumed with secret sorrow. The devotees of pleasure, who make life a jest and death a shadow, are themselves the saddest creatures in the world.

You may plant the rose in your sunniest window and shelter it from every blast, but the thorn will appear before the bud, and the worm may hide itself in the first and fairest blossom. You may toil for long and weary years to reach some coveted position, and when it is gained only wish yourself back where you began, that you might make a different choice; you may groan under the burdens which you are now bearing, and yet find yourself no happier when they are removed. You may think that had it not been for one great loss or disappointment you would be to-day entirely content with your condition, when it may have been that loss alone which saved you from utter ruin. You may search the world around, but you will find no path on which the cloud of trouble and sorrow never casts its shadow; you will enter no home which may not at any time be made the house of mourning; you will climb no height so lofty and serene as never to be beaten by storms or veiled in darkness. Such is man's lot in this world; and in all its changes he can find no rest, in all its sorrows no sufficient consolation, so long as he pictures his brightest prospects in the fading clouds, and builds his most substantial structures upon foundations that the storm may sweep away. Would you know how much reliance to place upon the

most cherished expectations of earthly good? Look up to the vanishing cloud and see. Would you know whether your present plan for gain or ease or pleasure will succeed? Tell me whether the sky will be clear or cloudy to-morrow, and I will tell you what lights and shadows will appear on the horizon of your earthly hopes.

And yet there is something for us to rely upon more sure and permanent than the changing aspects of the sky. There is a cloud of mercy which pours down blessing upon the parched waste of the most desolate heart, and there is a cloud of light that leads the way to glory and to God. Clouds are, in some sense, mediators between the heavens and the earth. They are material in substance, rising up from the deep and carrying heavy burdens on the wings of the wind. And so they belong to the earth. They are ethereal in lightness, standing without any visible support and moving without any apparent cause, and so belong to the heavens. They are stored with showers that fertilize the earth and sustain life, and they are charged with lightnings that blast and destroy. They shine in the flush of the dawn like islands of flame in a sea of fire, and they blacken the night with darkness that may be felt. They cover the traveler with a cooling screen from the burning sun like the shadow of a great rock in a weary land, and they shake the mountains with thunders of wrath. They sail in serene and gentle majesty like winged messengers of heaven

along the azure deep, and they rush through the howling heavens like billows from the pit of darkness, charged with angry lightnings and stored with magazines of thunderbolts.

And so the same cloud which pours down blessings upon one, breaks in tempest and affliction upon another. We must indeed all in this present state walk under a cloud. But every one is permitted to choose whether it shall be big with mercy or black with wrath. There is no judgment so awful as that which is inflicted for the abuse of mercy. There is no darkness so deep as that which follows the rejection of light.

The cloud of mercy is hovering near in the darkest hour. We have only to desire its approach and it will cover us with glory and salvation. God's acts and thoughts of kindness are as numerous as the drops of rain. And it takes them all to make the cloud of mercy by which the humble and trusting are refreshed, protected and guided in the way of peace. Our sins cannot be counted for number. And yet we have only to ask and God will blot them all out, as the countless drops of the morning cloud melt into clear air before the rising sun. The mercy of the everlasting God is as mysterious and incomprehensible as his might. We can have little idea of the power which could speak the earth into existence, with all its oceans and mountains and plains and living creatures. We are appalled by the bare thought of that omnipotence which could kindle the quenchless fires of the sun and the stars with

a breath, and strew the immensities of space with countless millions of worlds. But we can no more comprehend the greatness of the mercy which puts out the fires of remorse in the guilty soul, writes the names of the prisoners of death in the book of life, raises up the fallen children of men to sing with the seraphim, to associate with archangels, to make known the exceeding riches of the divine love to the principalities and powers of heaven for evermore.

That mercy surrounds us every moment like a thick cloud, dropping down the blessed rain upon the waste places of our hearts. Out of the cloud come voices of invitation, of entreaty and of command, directing us to the Lamb of God, and saying, "This is my beloved Son, hear ye him." The mercy of the everlasting God, dark only from excess of light, builds a pathway of glory from earth to heaven, and gives us angel guides to help us climb the shining steep, that we may reach a home where the cloud of mystery melts into light and the cloud of sorrow dissolves in song. That ladder, more glorious than the one seen in the dream of the patriarch at Bethel, is let down into every man's home, into every man's path, into every man's place of business, toil and pleasure. And a voice from above cries continually to the weary and wandering and troubled children of men, "Come up hither." Through all the clouds of sorrow, ignorance and perplexity, faith can see the redeemed of earth walking upon the shining battlements of heaven and longing

to welcome all who are now wandering in darkness to the land where there is no night.

God has written the transitoriness of all earthly things upon the clouds, that every eye may see it. He has given them beauty and made them a blessing, that they may the better represent things which charm for a time and disappoint in the end. When you are tempted to set your heart on earthly things, look up to the changing clouds and see how soon your possessions will pass away. God has clothed the clouds of the morning and the evening with evanescent beauty, that he may awaken in our hearts a longing for the land where the glory of his presence shall be an everlasting light.

God's Covenant of the Day and Night.

Thus saith the Lord: If ye can break my covenant of the day and my covenant of the night, and that there should not be day and night in their season, then will I cast away the seed of Jacob.—JER. xxxiii. 20, 26.

XVIII.

GOD'S COVENANT OF THE DAY AND NIGHT.

THE works and the word of God are the two doors that lead into the one temple of truth. Both stand open day and night, inviting all to enter. Over both are written in golden letters the divine words, "Seek and ye shall find, knock and it shall be opened unto you." Both send forth beams of the excellent glory which is enthroned within, and upon the full brightness of which no mortal eye can gaze. The separate streams of light which issue from the open portals of the one temple unite again harmoniously in the same beam, and thus prove the fact and proclaim the glory of their common source. The likeness of the one great Creator delineated by light drawn from his works and his word is the same. It must be a darkened and perverted heart which will not receive the light of Nature and the light of Revelation as coming from the same source, teaching the same truth and always agreeing with each other. The theologian who is afraid to receive the revelation of God in his works is as blind as the philosopher who shuts his eye to the clearer revelation of God in his word.

The Almighty Father is ever speaking to us by all the ordinances of the heavens and the earth. We have only to listen with a tender heart and a teachable mind, and we shall hear our Father's voice sounding forth in music and in mercy through all the course of the rolling year. The inspired Psalmist describes the several seasons as moving in orderly procession at the divine command, and the whole year as crowned in the triumph of grace and completeness by the Divine Hand.

The crown is the symbol of glory and the seal of power among the honored and the mighty of the earth. In common language it is the sign of completeness in structure and of success in action. The dome crowns the temple, the capital crowns the column, success crowns the well-ordered enterprise. The crown of the year is the glory of the divine goodness, which shines through all its course and bursts forth with the splendors of autumnal beauty and abundance at its close. The goodness that crowns the year bestows every line of beauty that adorns the landscape, every gift of plenty that fills the storehouse, every ray of light that gladdens the pathway of life. To the grateful heart every year is burdened with blessing and every season has its song.

We hear the voice of the Almighty in the roar of the winter's storm, and the earth is bound in fetters of ice at his command. He comes forth in the glory and the gladness of the blossoming spring, and bursting

flowers offer the incense of perfume, and the strong sons of the forest put on new robes to welcome their King. He pours the flood of exuberant life through all the growing forms and living tribes of Nature with the advancing summer, and everything that hath breath lends a voice to praise him. He crowns the year with goodness, and golden harvests bend in homage to the sire of the seasons, and the forests are all aflame with the glory of the coronation. Thus the Almighty Father maintains the beneficent order of the seasons in their fore-appointed round. He sends each with the promise of good, and in departing all leave their blessing behind. The mountains smoke with gathered clouds beneath the touch of his hand, and the heavens pour down rain. The flowers blossom and harvests wave and laughing streams sing on their way to the sea.

This divine constancy in the established order of Nature is one of the clearest and loudest voices with which God speaks to us in his works. It is one which the deaf can hear and the dull can understand. The inspired prophet in ancient time was instructed to adduce the constancy of the succession of day and night to confirm our faith in the stability of God's revealed word. Astronomers tell us with what exactness the covenant of the day and the night has been kept through the long succession of ages. And this is the more worthy of our reverent and thoughtful study because it is the covenant of order and harmony which binds the seasons

in their course and directs the revolution of all worlds in their orbits.

The vast globe of the earth swings in empty space with no support save the upholding word of the Almighty God. It flies in its orbit a thousand times faster than the swiftest railroad train. It rolls upon its axis so swift that a point on the surface at the equator moves as far as from Boston to St. Louis in a single hour. It is this rolling of the earth on its axis that brings the day and the night. And the revolution is completed in absolutely the same time from age to age. The greatest astronomers the world has ever seen, Laplace and Arago and Herschel and Mädler, skeptic and Christian alike, solemnly declare that the sidereal day has not varied in three thousand years the hundredth part of a second. If in ninety generations of men the day had grown longer or shorter by the hundredth part of the time that it takes the heart to beat once, astronomers could detect the change, and the covenant of the day and the night would be broken. But instruments that can measure the eighty-thousandth part of a second in space, and observations that have been continued three thousand years of time, can discover no variation.

It is impossible for me to move my hand a single yard or to walk the length of my room with a uniform motion. The inventive genius of man has never been able to make a wheel perform one revolution with perfect uniformity. The unseen hand of the Almighty

has been turning the vast globe of the earth for three thousand years, and men have been watching the revolutions with the nicest scrutiny till they have counted more than a million, and yet in all that time they have not detected the hundredth part of a second of irregularity. Every successive generation of observers finds the great earth-wheel rolling at the same rate, completing a revolution in the same time.

The astronomer sits in his lonely tower and looks out upon the evening star. He remembers that in the tables of his sublime and mysterious science it was written by another hand a hundred years before that on that evening, at a particular moment, a small, round, dark spot would appear upon the edge of that planet, pass slowly across the face of it and disappear. He turns the great glassy eye of his telescope toward that bright orb, brings it to the centre of his field of view, clamps the clock-work apparatus to hold it there, and then waits for the hour, the minute, the second to come.

The heavens are calm and clear. The belted planet on which the eye of the telescope is fixed is four hundred millions of miles away in the pathless void, and beyond the fields of space are gemmed with countless worlds. All are upheld by one Infinite Mind. All are guided by one Almighty Hand. All are resplendent with the glory of one Supreme Creator. If he should forget for one instant in a hundred years to roll the earth upon its axis or to wheel the planets in

their orbits, that astronomer would look in vain for the spot to appear on the face of the evening star.

But no: punctual to the instant of time, it touches the edge of the planet, advances and passes across the disk, and so proves that God's covenant of the day and night remains unbroken. The Hand that holds the firmament of stars is not weary. The Mind that marks the course for millions of worlds can never forget, is never confused. No matter how vast the extent, how various the order, how complex and mighty the forces of orbs and systems and universes in existence, God governs them all with infinite ease. He will not suffer the day-spring to run before or fall behind its time the hundredth part of a second in a thousand years.

Should God forget his covenant of the day and the night so far as to increase or diminish in the least the length of time in which the great earth-wheel turns on its axle, it would derange and in the end destroy the whole kingdom of Nature. The temperatures of the different zones would be changed, and all animal and vegetable life would die. The waters would be shaken out of the basin of the sea, and the dry land would be swept over with a universal deluge. It is only because the unseen hand of the Almighty turns the axle of the earth with perfect uniformity from age to age beneath our feet, that we are able to walk our streets by day or sleep in our houses by night.

The perfect uniformity with which God keeps his

covenant of the day and the night ensures order and harmony in the whole kingdom of Nature. The flowers bloom, the rain falls, the harvest ripens, the seasons come and go in their perfect and fore-appointed succession, because God has caused the day-spring to know its place and the sun its time of going down.

The vegetable kingdom has no power in itself to maintain its character or to continue its species. And yet the continued and conscious exercise of almighty power regulates its growth by established laws, so that the lapse of centuries has wrought no change. The kernel of Egyptian wheat, which was buried with the dead in the days of Moses, three thousand and three hundred years ago, may be brought forth and planted to-day beside other kernels which have been propagated through three thousand sowings and reapings, and the leaf and stalk and grain produced by the two will be precisely the same. The germ of life which has rested for thirty-three centuries in the tomb, and the one which has passed through the process of burial and resurrection three thousand times, still have the same nature and obey the same law.

The solitary palm which waves its drooping branches over the hallowed dust of fallen Jerusalem has the same leaf as the branches that were strewn in the path of Jesus when he beheld the city from the height of Olivet and wept over its impending doom. The giant cedars that stand alone upon the mountain as mournful monuments of the lost glories of Lebanon, are the same

in leaf and branch as those which fell before the hewers of Solomon and were carried to Jerusalem for the building of the first temple. The pale primrose that heralds the approach of spring, and the brilliant oleander that loads the air with its perfume and lines the water-courses of Palestine with its blazing efflorescence, have the same tint, diffuse the same odor as those which bloomed a hundred generations ago.

The conditions of growth and cultivation, the properties and uses of every production in the whole vegetable kingdom are the same from age to age. The juice of the plant which was a poison to the first human pair on the earth is a poison now. The fruit that was pleasant to the taste and that sustained life in Paradise is pleasant and healthful now. The discoveries that were made in the most distant age concerning the habits of plants, the properties of the soil, the methods of cultivation, may be acted upon with safety and profit to-day. Whatever we may learn concerning the best means of securing the fruits of the earth, we may transmit to others with the assurance that it will be useful and applicable down to the last generation of men that shall sow the field and reap the harvest.

God has made a covenant of the day and of the night, that the laws of growth and decay and the seasons of sowing and reaping shall remain unchanged as long as the earth shall stand. He points us to the constancy with which he keeps his covenant of the day and of the night, that we may know how sacredly he

will keep his covenant of promise with those who trust his word. The most exact science of modern times, and a series of observations continued through three thousand years can detect no deviation from the measure of the day and the night. The most severe and accurate criticism and the most venturesome reliance upon the word of God can find no failure in the fulfillment of the divine promise to the trusting and obedient heart. Firmly as we believe that the sun will rise and set, and that night and day will follow each other in their appointed succession, so firmly should we believe that God will remember his covenant of mercy and rescue the soul that cries to him in the time of trouble.

We all believe in the constancy of the established order of nature as much as we believe in our own existence. All the skeptics and philosophers in the world could not make us doubt for an instant that the sun will rise and set at its appointed hour. We believe that the nature and properties of every plant and animal will remain unchanged. The lark and the nightingale will sing the same note and wear the same plumage as long as there is an ear to be charmed with song or an eye to be delighted with beauty. The lion and the bear will haunt the same regions and raven for the same prey until the full acceptance of the Gospel has cultivated all the waste places of the earth and transformed the dens of wild beasts into the happy homes of men.

We send the seed of fruit and flower half round the

globe to be planted, in the full belief that in whatever condition of climate or soil it is reared the product will be the same. The kind of tree that now bears the fig, the olive or the apple will bear the same fruit, wherever cultivated, as long as the sun shall rise and set and the day shall follow the night. The shrub that now puts forth a rose has been bearing the same blossom ever since God said, "Let the earth bring forth the herb yielding seed, and the fruit tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself." We insert a small bud from the pear into the branch of the thorn, and when the scion shoots forth into a strong limb, though it is nourished by the vital fluid from the thorn, we confidently expect that it will yield the fruit of the pear. The sap ascends the common trunk of the thorn in one current and of one kind. When it reaches a certain height it divides. One stream follows the native branch and brings forth sharp spines and a small, useless berry. The other turns into the engrafted stock of the pear, and by some subtle and mysterious chemistry is so transformed as to nourish a thornless branch and bring forth a large and luscious fruit. So imperative and unchangeable is the law that every tree shall yield fruit after its kind. We believe that the fertilizing substances which now secure a rapid and luxuriant growth will have the same effect when applied to the root of the tree and plant for ages to come.

And this sacred and sublime order shall pervade the whole material creation as far as the light flies and the

spheres roll. The unseen hand of the Almighty shall continue to turn the great globe of the earth upon its axis with perfect uniformity. He shall continue to carry it through pathless space around the sun, six hundred millions of miles a year and a thousand times swifter than the eagle flies, and yet with no jar, no shaking of the sea upon the land, no collision with other worlds which he is carrying by millions as swift and as far over the fields of immensity. The sun shall pour from the far fountain of his fiery throne the same exhaustless flood of light in which the whole creation smiles. The stars shall keep the stations that they held of old. Every atom and every world shall be held in position, and the harmony of the spheres shall be kept as perfect as it was when the morning stars sang together over the new creation, and God himself, in the review of everything that he had made, pronounced it very good.

This perfect order, this unchanging constancy in all created things, the greatest as well as the least, is what we all see and know and rely upon. And God calls this great system of order and constancy in the material creation his covenant with the day and the night, with the earth and the sun and the stars. It could not be maintained for a moment without his word of power. We are dependent for our existence, and for everything that can make existence a blessing, upon the preservation of that order, upon the keeping of God's covenant. If the Infinite Sustainer should

slacken his hand and let the earth fall out of its course or cease to roll evenly upon its axis, the fairest landscape would become a desolation. Fire and flood would sweep from pole to pole. The Power that made the worlds must keep them in order every moment, or the universe would return to chaos and night resume its everlasting reign.

And shall not this perfect and eternal harmony of the earth and the heavens draw our hearts to him whose promised mercy is all our hope? God keeps his covenant of the day and the night unbroken from age to age, that we may see his faithfulness and commit the keeping of our souls to him—that we may be made partakers of his unchangeable and everlasting nature. We are apt to see God more in his judgments than in his mercies. Let the tornado sweep over a great city, let the earthquake shake its foundations with such terrible violence as to prostrate hundreds of houses and destroy thousands of lives, let the angel of the pestilence pass along a hundred streets and smite the old and the young, the feeble and the strong, with a resistless stroke, and all would say, This is the finger of God. Men would proclaim a fast and call a solemn assembly, and pour out their supplications unto him that he would save them from utter destruction. How much better to say of the healthful season, and the silent succession of day and night, and the divine harmony of the whole creation, "This is the Lord's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes!" How much

better to acknowledge the hand of God in the summer shower and the cooling wind, in the genial sunshine and the gathered harvest, by which our lives are sustained, than in the pestilence and the tornado, by which our lives are destroyed!

It is our highest wisdom to trust in the immutable and everlasting God. With him there is no variableness nor shadow of turning. Our lives will be successful and satisfactory to us only so far as we make him our Friend and rely upon his unchanging word. He writes the covenant of his promise broad as the heavens and deep as the firm-set earth. Day unto day utters forth his faithfulness, night unto night declares his truth. Everything that lives and grows in the whole kingdom of Nature bears witness to his power, his wisdom, his love. You had better forget every human friend you have in the world than to forget God. You had better lose faith in the succession of day and night and summer and winter than to lose faith in Him who orders all the changes of light and darkness, heat and cold. When the icy wind howls and the earth is covered with snow, you speak of the opening spring and the coming summer, and you form all your plans upon the full expectation that the seasons of the year will keep their appointed round. Nobody can shake your faith in the constancy of the established order of Nature. If some one should come to you in January and prophesy, with the fervor of Ezekiel and the weeping of Jeremiah, that in the next

midsummer the rivers would be frozen, the fields would be covered with snow and the sun would not give heat enough to melt icicles at noon, you would not believe him. You would feel perfectly assured that God would bring the summer in its season.

And yet all this divine constancy in the material world is maintained that we may have faith in God's word when he says, "I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also who is of a contrite and humble spirit. All things shall work together for good to them that love me. The mountains shall depart, and the hills shall be removed, but my kindness shall not depart, neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed." We believe God unhesitatingly when he makes known his will by the powers and properties of material nature. Why should we not all the more believe him when he says that his word of threatening and promise to the children of men shall be firmer than the everlasting hills, more sure and immutable than the ordinances of the heavens and the earth?

It has been often said that "the undevout astronomer is mad"—mad, because, while exploring the immensity of creation, and passing from glory to glory in the mighty vision of countless worlds, he has no thought of Him who made them all. And not less mad is he who can behold the evidences of the divine wisdom and love in the garden, the field and the forest, and yet not have his heart drawn forth in praise and trust and prayer toward Him whose beneficent Spirit clothes

the grass with its green robe, adorns the flowers with inimitable beauty, gives strength and majesty to the oak, and breathes the breath of life into all creatures that live. Good men sometimes fear that they shall be deceived and blinded by vain philosophy if they try to read the book of Nature beside the Book of God. But it is not a vain nor an unspiritual philosophy which teaches all that can be known about the forms that exist, and the creatures that live, and the laws that act all around us, and by the aid of such instruction leads us to the knowledge and devout contemplation of the wondrous Being who made them all. Were we disposed devoutly to receive all the instructions which he communicates through his works, we should better understand his word, and we should find it much easier to make our daily life a continued and happy walk with God.

All true greatness, strength and consistency of character in man, all honor, success and joy in life, must be founded upon faith in God. Philosophy teaches obedience to the laws of nature. It makes God a mysterious and unknown force aback of all form and phenomena, and man a machine set in motion by that force and driven by unknown means to an unknown end. Religion teaches obedience to the will of God. It makes man a living soul kindled into life by the breath of the Almighty, and endowed with such capacities as should belong to the child and heir of an Infinite Father. Religion calls upon every man to

live with the great destiny of immortality ever in view. It makes faith in God the first and strongest restraint from all evil and motive to all good.

Believe in God as your Creator, and you will see his glory in all the works of his hands. Believe in him as the Supreme Governor of the universe, and you will see his laws acting in sublime and awful harmony all around you. Believe in him as your Father, and you will see his face bending over you radiant with love, and you will hear his voice thrilling with compassion when you are prostrate with affliction and no human friend can help you. Believe in him as your Saviour, and you can rejoice that your sins are all forgiven, your sorrows are all healed, your wants are all relieved, and the prospect for the future is glorious with the dawn of heaven. Believe in God as your portion and hope for ever, and when life's journey is ended you can go forth upon the untried way of death with the triumphant song, "I know that my Redeemer liveth."

The Time of the Singing.

The time of the singing is come.—CANT. ii. 12.

J.JOHN. J.R.RICE.

A FROZEN WORLD

XIX.

THE TIME OF THE SINGING.

THE harmony of the world is maintained by the continual balancing of forces, one against another. The great powers of Nature are so strong that the divine voice must ever say to them all, as it says to the sea, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." Any one of them, left unrestrained, would bring the earth and the universe to desolation. Suppose, for example, that the great Sire of the seasons should fail to arrest the descending course of the sun at the winter solstice, and leave the cold to go on increasing through all the year: the bare thought of the consequence is enough to fill the mind with horror. The heavens are blackened with storm after storm, and the clouds scatter the hoarfrost like ashes, till the deep valleys are filled and the high mountains are covered with a deluge of snow. The north wind howls from his icy home with sleety hair and icy breath, and none can stand before his cold. The sun imparts no life to the dead world with his slanting beams, and the misty moon sheds her pale light upon a universal grave.

The cold becomes more intense with the narrowing

circles of the sun. The frozen clouds descend in battering hail. The thin vapor of the morning, cast into millions of crystal spears, pierces the tingling flesh wherever exposed. The icy air abstracts warmth from all living bodies faster than the overtasked laboratory of life can kindle it. The tenacious trunk of the living oak and all thick trees, the exposed mass of granitic rock, the deepening crust of the solid earth, pierced by the infinitesimal wedges of expanding frost, burst with the peal of continual thunder. And the roar of the rending masses, mingling with the moan of the winds through the shattered forests and over the earth's fast thickening graves, seems like the sounds of a battle in which the mightiest forces of Nature meet in mutual conflict to desolate and destroy the habitation of man.

The sun at last sinks beneath the southern horizon to rise no more, and the "icy earth swings blind and blackening in the moonless air"—a howling waste dark and wild, beaten with perpetual storms—a frozen hell, where "cold performs the effect of fire." The fitful aurora, gleaming higher up the northern sky as the winter's reign becomes complete, seems as if it were the lurid glare of vengeance sent to light the accursed orb on its pathway of wrath, and to hold high the fit signal of an outcast world wherever it may go wandering through the solitudes and abysses of space.

Such would be the effect on the world of Nature in our temperate zone should God permit the winter's icy reign to run through all the year. In some old book

of voyages to the Arctic regions I have read an account of a vessel which was found fixed immovably in ice, and all on board had been transformed into statues of ice. There was the cabin boy, wrapped in his narrow locker, where he had passed insensibly from the sleep of the night into that frozen slumber which knows no waking. There was the helmsman with his faithful hand frozen to the helm, with which he had striven in vain to steer his way out from the drifting islands of ice. There was the watch at the mast-head, with his fixed and glassy eye still looking forth upon vacancy, as if to find some passage through the interlocking arms and besieging battalions of ice—a frozen sentinel surrounded by his frozen foes. There was the steward below, still bending over the tinder-box, with flint and steel in his frozen hand. There was the captain at his desk, with the log-book open before him and his frozen fingers still holding the pen with which he had written the words, "For a whole day the steward has been trying in vain to kindle the lost fire." All were dead, changed to ice. They had eyes, but they saw not; ears, but they heard not; hands, but they felt not; organs of speech, but they spake not; the dress and forms and attitudes of life were theirs, yet frozen into statues of ice and made by eternal winter as hard and glistening as marble. The horrible representation of life in death was more fearful to the brave voyagers who found them there than the icy rigors of the climate itself. They hurried away from the sepulchral ship,

leaving the motionless crew as they found them in their frozen slumber.

The mariners upon the sunny seas of our temperate zone would be changed to such spectral crews of icy death in a single year should the Divine Power fail to arrest the increasing cold of any winter. God breathes upon the earth, and the green foliage of spring breaks forth upon branches that but a little while before were sparkling with flowers of frost. He hangs the fruits of autumn upon boughs that were bending with the weight of snow. And every return of life to the dead world of Nature is a resurrection wrought by divine power. If God did not bless the springing of the flowers and of the grass, they would sleep in the dust of the earth for ever.

The spring is a country child. To be charmed with her bloom and beauty we must see her in her own home. The patch of green in the public squares of the great city, and the stunted trees with their homesick look along the crowded street, are poor substitutes for fields of springing grain and forests of green foliage and landscapes of living verdure.

And yet even here, where the sweet face of mother earth is blinded with brick and stone, we cannot be unconscious of the fact that a mighty change is going on in the world of Nature when "the time of the singing is come." We feel it in the air. We see it in the sunshine. We hear it in the salutations with which men meet each other every morning. We should need

to be lifeless ourselves not to be moved when the whole creation around us is heaving and awaking with the stupendous miracle which divine power works every year in the resurrection of spring from the icy grave of winter.

The timid grass comes peeping forth from neglected corners and roadsides. The climbing vine puts out tendrils and prepares to creep a little higher on the naked wall. The shadow of rustling foliage thickens every day in the public squares and on the sunny sides of the streets. And what we see in miniature in the city is displayed in all the magnificence of nature in the open country. Along the winding streams and across the plains and up the hillsides and over the wood-crowned mountains, life, in myriads of forms, springs up and luxuriates in the milder air and the genial sunshine. The landscape, which a little while before was desolate and dreary, is all alive with the flow of streams and the flutter of wings. The glad tribes of the sun come back from their winter migrations, and they rejoice to find their old homes as bright and cheery as when they left them basking in the autumn light. The cold skies of the northern clime, softened by the lessening night and the lengthening day, look down in silent benediction on the springing grass and the sprouting grain.

The distant mountains, on which the snow laid deep and cold through all the winter months, throw off the chilling pall of death, and put on the royal robe of

living green in which the whole creation smiles. The delicate-footed spring walks in the vales and over the hills, and on the high places of the earth, and the flutter of her garments scents the air with fresh blossoms wherever she goes. The mountain streams break loose from their fetters of frost, and roll with accumulated volume and velocity on their way to the distant sea. The legions of snow and hail and stormy wind go home to rest in the icy halls of their native north. On the broad plain, where they fought and trampled out the life of every living thing, the gentle zephyr sings its evening song; the new-born verdure bows to the gentle baptism of the night's dew; the open flower swings its fragrant cup to the breeze of the morning in offering grateful incense to the King of heaven. There, too, the young bird will soon try its half-fledged wing. The tiny insect, whose frail life is only cased up in defences of gossamer, will live its day of existence without knowing that there is such a thing as winter's cold. The warm smile of the genial sun will suffuse the whole face of Nature with the glow of health and gladness. The soft wind of the south will woo the feeble invalid from his close-pent chamber. He will venture timidly forth into the open air, and drink into his exhausted frame fresh draughts from the exuberant life with which the whole creation overflows.

And now, when we go forth into the fields in the bright morning or the fresh evening-tide, we can think of nothing save the wondrous resurrection wrought

by the Divine Hand in the world of Nature. How great and mighty, and yet how silent and gentle, the change! It seems but yesterday that we wrapt ourselves in our thickest garments when exposed to the open air, and the shivering horse shook his frosty mane and turned his face from the freezing wind. Now we choose the shady side of the street to escape the heat, and the feeble invalid pants beneath the weight of his warm dress. The young lambs sport on the hillsides, where the wind howled and the ice shone in the cold light of the winter moon. It seems but yesterday that the freezing blast played upon the ten thousand shreds of the evergreen pine, and swayed to and fro the long arms of the leafless forest, making its melancholy moan over the frozen grave of a buried world. Now, the forest walks are checkered with the flickering shade of green leaves, and the gentle breeze quivers with the song of birds.

And shall we observe this universal resurrection from the icy grave of winter every year only as a thing of course? Shall we idly luxuriate in the balm and the beauty, the softening skies and the sensuous joy of returning spring, without once asking whose hand leads the procession of the seasons in their annual round? Has all this mighty change in the natural world no lessons of heavenly wisdom for our instruction? Did Christ make the flowers speak, yet leave the spring without a voice? May not this renewing, regenerating Spirit, diffused through all Nature and

working with new activity in all living forms, enter into communion with us and breathe new life into our souls?

Surely God has given us the divine faculty of reason that we may recognize his hand in all the changes of the rolling year. What we call the law of Nature is only the will of God. He leads the solemn march of the seasons in unbroken order from age to age. He makes summer and winter. He maintains the constancy of day and night. He speaks to us by the perfect and beneficent order of the natural world, not less truly than by miracle and special revelation. It is the uniformity, not the interruption, of natural law which calls for the loudest tribute of gratitude and praise to the great Sire of the seasons, the Monarch of the climes and of all that dwell in them. We should see more of God in the gentle and constant return of spring than in the earthquake and the storm, the pestilence and the famine. It is the cold and skeptical spirit of worldliness that sees no God in common things. It is unbelief that would see great signs and startling wonders, and overlook the perpetual witness which God gives of himself in the orderly coming and going of the year.

Suppose yourself walking in the open country, surrounded by the waste and desolation of winter's icy reign. The frozen herbage of the previous year crackles and breaks beneath your feet. The long branches of the forest creak and groan beneath their thick coating of ice. The wind howls in hoarse disso-

nance over hill and plain, and drives the crystal spears of frost into your tingling flesh. The legions of the storm, sleet and snow drive in thick-charging battalions along the darkened air. Suddenly, as by the stroke of an enchanter's wand, the whole scene of desolation is changed before your eyes into the luxuriance and gladness of summer's high and gorgeous noon. The earth beneath your feet is carpeted with living green. The forest is clothed with rich foliage. The wind breathes in gentle murmurs and bears the fragrance of expanded blossoms. The insect and the feathered tribes sing in the grove or rejoice on the wing. And the whole landscape, which but a moment before seemed a universal grave, is full of life and joy.

Would you not consider one such instantaneous transfiguration of Nature an overwhelming display of divine power? Could you see it with your own eyes, and not feel an irresistible impulse to lift up your voice in loud exclamations of wonder and joy at the great and marvelous works of the Lord Almighty?

And yet such a vast change from winter's blight to summer's bloom wrought in a moment would be a far less beneficent display of divine power than is made every year in sight of us all by the silent and gradual return of spring. We are dependent upon the uniform course of Nature for our very existence and for everything that can make existence a blessing. It is a greater display of wisdom and power and love to

maintain the orderly succession of heat and cold and day and night, than it would be stop the sun in the heavens or bring forth the flowers of spring in the depths of winter. If we look for the hidden cause behind the visible result, we shall need no miracle to make us believe in God. But if we see nothing but a soulless principle of order in the uniformity of the seasons, no miracle can extinguish our doubts or establish our faith. It is the fool's presumption to gaze and wonder. It is the fool's fate to despise and perish.

The earth is full of life again when spring returns, because it has been touched by the hand of Him who breathed into man's nostrils the breath of life and made him a living soul. To renew the face of the earth is the peculiar and divine prerogative of Him who has brought life and immortality to light in the Gospel. When we see the springing grass, the opening bud and the expanding leaf, we should feel ourselves to be looking upon the work of Him who stopped the bier on its way to the grave and brought back the flush of life to the pale cheek of the dead. When we feel the warm breath of the south wind blessing the earth and bringing the rain, our hearts should go forth in thankfulness to him who breathed upon his disciples and said, "Receive ye the Holy Ghost."

We must wake to spiritual life ourselves, and then we shall see revelations of God in all the phenomena of Nature. We all count it an act of divine charity

only for once to relieve the poor in their poverty and to visit the widow and the fatherless in their affliction. Shall we not much more wonder and adore in view of that Infinite Beneficence which crowns the opening year with goodness and pours the abundance of the harvest into millions of homes? We praise the man who carries bread to the hungry and kindles the fire on the hearth of the lowly. Shall we not much more praise the great Father who pours the warm sunlight into the homes of the thankless and fills the hearts of dependent millions with food and gladness?

When the quickening breath of the Almighty is calling forth life in countless forms from the cold grave of winter, is it not a fitting season for us to crave a spiritual and divine quickening in our souls? The flowers bloom only to fade. The harvests ripen only to perish. The birds sing only for a season. All things that live in the world of Nature are appointed unto death. The soul that is quickened by the Divine Spirit in the new spring-time of faith and love shall never die. The glorious Sun of Righteousness rises upon us with healing in his beams, that he may waken our spiritual nature to a blessed and an immortal life. The vast and mighty resurrection of spring from the cold grave of winter is only the sign, the passing symbol, of the divine power which Christ displays in quickening souls that are dead in trespasses and sins. The great Sire of the seasons comes forth in the glory and the gladness of the blossoming spring; he pours

new life into all the vital forces of Nature with the advancing summer, that he may awaken in us a longing for that life over which death shall have no power. You have only to throw open the windows of your soul, and life, from the light of the world, will come in. You have only to break up the fallow ground of your heart, and the needed blessing will fall like the rain and refresh like the dew. The sunlight and the rain are only symbols of God's greater bounty in the bestowment of spiritual life.

The prophets in ancient time reproached the people of Israel because they failed to discern the operation of God's hand in the order of Nature. The stork and the crane, the turtle and the swallow returning from their annual migration, the former and the latter rain given in their season, the appointed weeks of harvest fulfilled in their order, the ox obedient to his owner and the ass seeking daily sustenance at his master's crib, the century-living cedar defying a thousand storms on the cloud-swept mountain, the frail flower of the valley perishing when the wind passeth over,—were all appointed to teach men the great lesson of trust in God and obedience to his word. Even the heathen were declared to be without excuse, because they did not discern the eternal power and Godhead in all the varied phenomena of Nature through the whole course of the circling year.

And when the Divine Teacher himself appeared, he clothed the most exalted spiritual truths in the garb of

common and earthly things. The fowls of the air and the lilies of the field; the growing blade of corn and the teeming branches of the vine; the fig tree shooting forth its tender bud or scattering its untimely fruit; the grain cast from the sower's hand and the smallest of seeds springing up into a branching tree; the reddening clouds of sunset betokening the fair weather of the morning; the swelling torrent of the mountain sweeping away the fool's house from its sandy foundations,—all teach lessons of the deepest spiritual truth when Jesus gives them a divine interpretation. And he sharply reproved the men of his time because they had not learned from the fowls of the air and the grass of the field and the seasons of the year the lessons of trust which he taught in his Word. He said that the very stones in the streets of Jerusalem would cry out in hosannas to welcome the King of Zion if the shouting children should hold their peace. And surely it is not too much for us to say that the living and growing world, bursting into new life under the reviving breath of spring, speaks in numberless voices of the Creator's glory. It is in the spirit of the Psalms and of the Prophets and of Christ himself that we feel ourselves called upon to join in the universal hymn of praise and thanksgiving which rises to God from all his works. Standing in the open country, with all the new life and bloom of returning spring around us, we have only to ask, in the spirit of the inspired men of old, what is the cause of the mighty change, and ten thou-

sand voices will answer—God. The silvery streams singing down the hillsides, and the waving forests swept by the south wind; the eagle soaring in his pride of place, and the swallow twittering round the farm-house; the high, dark mountain, with its sky-piercing summit, and the quiet meadows basking in the sunshine,—all

"Utter forth God, and fill the earth with praise."

The hibernating brute, in compliance with the mysterious promptings of his nature, lies down to his long winter's slumber, and rises up again to rejoice in the return of spring, with unvarying regularity. The crane and the swallow, the migratory birds of every species, know their appointed times. They depart and return as invariably as the tides follow the moon in heaven, rising and falling in eternal flow. And if we ask what that mysterious something is which we call instinct, and which is an infallible guide to the brute creation, we can only say it is something inexplicable and divine. It is not skill or practice which enables the bird to build her nest and the bee to shape her waxen cell. It is the Divine Mind itself working in the unconscious creature according to its own choice and plan.

And the same Divine Mind is ever working in us, without our leave and in a way beyond our control. We are prompted to some courses of conduct and we are held back from others by a certain divine Instinct

just as truly as the bee is prompted to lay down the lines of its waxen cell with mathematical precision; just as truly as the stork, without any plan of its own, is led to seek the south in the autumn and the north in the spring. And this same divine Instinct creates within us an irrepressible craving for a higher life and a better home than earth and time can give. It will not permit us to be satisfied with pleasures and possessions that must soon pass away and perish. It will not let us forget the great fact that we have been created to live for ever. It impels us with solemn and secret urgency to look for an everlasting foundation on which to build our most cherished hopes. This is the movement of the Infinite Mind acting so gently within us that we think the impulse is our own. This is the still small voice of God whispering in the secret place of the soul, and creating within us a craving for a blessed and an immortal life.

It becomes us to reverence that inward Voice, to stand in awe of that divine Instinct which impels us to look forward to the great destiny of the future. It speaks in the secret places of retirement, and it makes us feel that it is an awful and sacred thing to be alone with God. It speaks in the dark hour of trial and temptation, and we have only to heed its monition and we shall be led to the source of infinite strength and consolation. It speaks in the moments of the most solemn reflection, and it makes us feel that no earthly possession can compensate for the loss of the soul. It speaks

in the loving-kindness of a heavenly Father, in the redeeming love of a dying Saviour, in the pleadings and persuasions of a divine Comforter, in ten thousand mercies, instructions and providences for good, and it always creates a longing for a higher life and a better home. It always declares that the favor of God alone can satisfy the soul. It always gives meaning and power to the word of the ancient prophet—"Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call upon him while he is near."

Earth-Teachings.

The earth shall teach thee.—Job xii. 8.

XX.

EARTH-TEACHINGS.

GOD made the earth and filled it with riches and beauty for man to dwell in. He was a long time in building and preparing the house before he gave it into the hands of its destined occupant. Uncounted ages before a human foot trod the earth the Almighty Father was lifting up the mountains, and leveling the plains, and marking out the channels of the rivers, and storing the secret chambers of the hills with treasures, that his earthly children in all succeeding time might have everything to supply their wants in the house which he had built for them.

When a rich and indulgent human father builds a house for his son, he chooses the situation, he lays out the grounds, he plans the whole structure, he proportions and finishes the apartments, he provides for internal conveniences and comforts, he adorns the walls and niches and windows with works of art, he fills the chambers with furniture and the storerooms with provisions. And all is done with so much forethought and generosity, with so much regard for the peculiar

wants and tastes of the son, and with so many expressions of the father's own mind and heart, that the son, when he comes to live in the house, is reminded of his father every hour of the day. He looks at a picture on the wall and says, "That is just my father's taste." He enters an apartment and he says, "Everything in this room was made under my father's eye and by his direction." He looks out of the window and he sees the flowers and trees that his father planted. He lies down to sleep at night upon a bed that his father bought. He wakes in the morning surrounded with sources of enjoyment which his father provided. We should say that a son living in such a house must be very thankless indeed if he could forget his father. We should say that everything about him would teach him from day to day new lessons of his father's forethought and generosity.

Even so our heavenly Father has built the great house of the earth, and he has finished and furnished the mighty structure so richly that everything around us should speak to us of him. The heavens above us declare his glory and the earth is full of his praise. Everything that we see, possess or enjoy has received its existence, its form and use and properties from the All-creative Mind. We are clothed from his flocks and fields. We walk in his strength. He delights us with the beauty and he instructs us with the variety of his works. Every faculty of our being is his gift. Every hour we live he redeems our life from destruction.

This magnificent house of the earth displays the handiwork of our Father in every apartment. There is a beauty in the structure and a mystery in the life of the leaf, the blade of grass, the smallest insect, which we cannot comprehend. There is an exhaustless richness in the sunlight, in the seasons, in the productions of the earth. There is a grandeur in the forests, the mountains, the oceans, which are ever lifting up the devout mind to the Giver of all good, the Maker of all worlds.

We are affected and wrought upon every moment by these great and marvelous works of God with which we are surrounded. The cold of winter and the heat of summer kindle emotions within us, and put our minds upon trains of thought to which we should have been strangers had not God appointed the changing seasons of the earth to teach us. Our whole inward world of thought and feeling is built up of materials which we draw from the outward world around us. It is impossible to think at all, except so far as we use the images of these earthly things which we see and possess, which we enjoy and suffer. We are bound to the earth by chains that hold every particle of our bodies—every nerve and sense and organ. This material house which God has built for the soul to live in is itself a part of the earth, and it must be given back to the dust from which it was taken. It becomes us therefore to receive with solemn interest the lessons which this great house of the earth is appointed by its

Maker to teach. It becomes us to study the great and marvelous work of our Father, that we may learn what thoughtfulness, what minute and tender consideration he has had for us in building a house for us to live in.

And this is the first lesson which the earth teaches the devout and attentive mind—the wise, kind and special forethought of our Father in building and furnishing a home for his earthly children. Long before God planted a garden eastward in Eden for the first human pair to dwell in, he was preparing the whole earth for its future inhabitant. Mountains of rock were worn away by centuries of storms and milleniums of changing seasons, and the particles removed by heat and cold and rain were carried down to the plain and mixed in due proportions with other elements to form the fertile soil. Mighty forests were reared through long successions of ages, and the substance of the decayed vegetation was strewn in thick beds along the river banks and over the wide prairies to prepare rich fields for our wheat and corn. Clay and lime and shells were deposited on the floor of the sea, and then the vast beds were uplifted above the waters, that we might plant gardens and build houses and inhabit great cities where the monsters of the deep once played and the billows rolled without a shore. Great convulsions of fire and flood and earthquake and volcano broke up the rocky strata, transported the loosened fragments long distances over the surface, rolled them

smooth in the strong currents of many waters, ground them to powder in the whirling mill of mighty maelstroms and roaring cataracts, diversified the form of hills and valleys and plains. And all this was done that we might have access to the secret riches of this great house of the earth, and that every one of the great family of man might find a congenial home among the hills, on the plain, or by the river side, and that all might find pleasant and profitable occupation. The storms and floods and upheavals of far-distant ages were sent forth to toil, like blind Titans, amid darkening mists and quaking mountains and crashing icebergs, in reducing the elements of the earth to order and in preparing the green landscape to smile upon its new possessor when man opened his wondering eyes upon the beautiful world which God had made for him.

And every feature in the earth's surface, every new discovery of its exhaustless riches, should teach us how long and generously our Father was providing for our need before we came into possession of our earthly house. It touches our hearts when we find that a friend has remembered us far off in a foreign land, and has brought home some memento of scenes which he visited, just because he knew we would be pleased with such a remembrance. And we think all the more of it if that friend had great cares and responsibilities upon his mind, and he incurred much trouble and expense just to let us know that he had not forgotten us.

There have been great thoughts of kindness toward us in the Infinite Mind from of old, even from everlasting. That great Being who built all worlds and who upholds all with the word of his power has never failed to think of us as a wise and loving Father thinks of his children. He has employed uncounted ages in preparing the earth, the air, the waters and the light to yield us the means of subsistence and the comforts which we enjoy day by day. We are saved from pain and intolerable agony from hour to hour, just because our heavenly Father foresaw and provided for our necessities a thousand ages ago.

And surely we must be very unthankful if we do not delight to think of such a Friend. We must be very thoughtless if we are not constantly seeing and experiencing something to draw our minds to our Father's love. It should be just as easy and natural for us to think of God and thank him for his kindness, as it would be to think of a human friend who had given us a house to live in and provided us with every comfort that money can buy.

The essence of all religion is simply to own and regard our relationship to God just as it is—to think and act and feel toward him just as his kindness to us demands. All religious exercises, devout meditation, reading the divine word, longings after purity, faith, love, prayer, praise, worship, are simply manifestations of right dispositions toward God. Everything that we learn, possess or enjoy is given to teach us something

about God. And therefore it is the most strange, unreasonable and foolish thing in man not to think of God. If we would only think of him as often as he gives us something to remind us of his care, he would be in all our thoughts and we should talk of him and praise him all the day along.

The husbandman talks much of the weather, because all the fruit of his labor depends upon his having a favorable season. The merchant and manufacturer talk of prices, because all their income and means of support depend upon the question whether prices shall rise or fall. Mariners on the ocean are always talking and thinking of the clouds, the sky and the wind, because their very life is in the power of the elements. Parents talk much of their children, because their hopes, their joys, their sorrows, their affections are bound up with their children. But we all have more to do with God than with any of the things about which men talk so much and so freely. And therefore it would be the most natural and proper thing in the world for us to think and talk more of God than the farmer of his fields, the merchant of his goods, the mariner of the deep. And everything around us in this world is made by God to remind us of him, and to bind us in bonds of love and gratitude to our greatest Benefactor.

The earth is full of brightness and beauty; it echoes with voices of music and gladness. And yet the earth teaches us, in the most solemn and impressive manner, that some great wrong has been done in this beautiful

house of God's building, and that the blessed Father is displeased with the conduct of his children. The whole creation groans and travails in pain together. Storms rage with destructive violence and desolate the fields while the grain is green. Volcanoes pour forth their fiery flood, and the fruits of man's industry are swept away by the molten stream. The earthquake yawns, and whole cities are swallowed up or shaken to the ground in a moment. Pestilence sweeps with its viewless wings over a whole continent, and the habitations of millions are filled with mourning and death. The rain is withholden, the harvest fails, and famine comes as an unbidden guest to countless homes. The nerves of our bodies, which were endued with the capacity for feeling and enjoyment, are often set on fire with pain. All living creatures have the seeds of death planted in their vital constitution. The dust which we tread beneath our feet once lived and moved in organized bodies. We ourselves must soon return to the dust from which we sprang. The whole earth is one vast sepulchre of the countless dead.

Now, all this widespread desolation in the material world, and the deeper and darker woe which it inflicts upon man's thinking and sensitive soul, are sent of God to show us his displeasure at the violation of his wise and beneficent laws. The voice of the groaning creation is lifted up in mournful and agonizing pleading to hold us back from the self-destruction which attends the life of sin. Storms and pestilences, earthquakes

and volcanoes, famine and fever, headaches and heart-aches teach us that it is a dreadful thing to disobey a God of infinite love. He only desires our happiness, and he provides for it in a thousand ways that we never thank him for. And when he leaves us to suffer, and surrounds us with the woes of an ever-suffering and dying world, it is only to teach us that disobedience to him is madness and self-destruction. He lets loose the flood and fire and pestilence occasionally and to a limited degree, to show us how mighty and terrible are the powers that will be against us if we do not have him for our Friend.

It makes us tremble when we read in the Holy Word that God is angry with the wicked every day. We are appalled when Christ himself tells us what portion awaits the unreclaimed in the world to come. But the experience and observation of every day fully confirm all that the Bible says about God's displeasure against sin. The pains and sorrows, the disasters and deaths which enter into the history of every man's life, are so many loud and solemn voices declaring that the great and good Father is grieved and displeased by the conduct of those who destroy themselves. He desires nothing of them so much as their present and everlasting happiness. He has provided for their well-being in all the laws of his kingdom and in all the works of his hands. Suffering, whether of the body or of the mind, all the miseries and calamities of this woe-stricken world, come because man will not choose God's

way of happiness. They forsake the fountain of living waters, and hew for themselves broken cisterns that can hold no water.

The earth teaches the frailty and the mortality of man. The great globe is one universal grave, in which all the living generations of the past lie buried. Wherever we go we are walking upon the dust of the countless dead. The flowers bloom only to fade. The green grass, the waving harvests, the mighty forests spring up from the earth only to return to the earth again. Every living creature that shares with us in the great mystery of life will soon and certainly die. We ourselves must shortly take our place with all the generations of the past. These sensitive bodies in which our souls now live, which we now feed and clothe and guard and keep with constant care, must soon go back to the earth, and become no better than the dust which is blown about by the wind and trodden under foot in the street.

But nobody believes that the death of the body will be the end of our conscious, responsible being. Those who profess to think so contradict their skepticism every day they live. But where shall the deathless soul find a habitation when this earthly house of the body is dissolved? What shall become of this conscience that rebukes for wrong-doing and sits in judgment on the secret thought? What service shall be found for this memory that clings to the past as the drowning cling to the weeds that hold them beneath

the wave? What prospect shall open for this hope that looks forth with infinite longing to the future? What objects shall employ this capacity for love that must ever have something to cling to? What glory, what joy shall be set before this lofty aspiration, which can never rest with any present possession? What is to become of this deathless, spiritual being when the body lies down in the grave?

This is the great question which the teaching earth cannot answer. This is the dark problem which human reason cannot solve. The book of divine revelation alone tells us that when this earthly house of the soul is dissolved, we may have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. To secure an admission into that blessed and everlasting habitation is surely the great business of life here. All the possessions and pleasures of time are valuable to us mainly as a means of preparing for the great destiny of the future.

We can have no right ideas about the dignity, the worth, the supreme end and purpose of our being if we disregard the one fact that we are created to live for ever. This frail and perishable body is only so much animated earth. When the soul leaves it, it will be like other dust. It is the body that binds us to earth and time. When that dies, the soul's true life begins. If we live only for this present life, the bird, the beast and the worm will rebuke us for putting ourselves on a level with them, when God made us to be

heirs of immortality. Our bodies will go down to the dust, deserving no more honor than the body of the brute, if we do not consecrate them by desires and purposes and hopes that take hold on heaven and everlasting life.

It is well for every man to put these plain truths in some form frequently to his own mind: "I shall never die. These faculties which I possess I must cultivate for eternity. This property which I own I must use in laying up treasure in heaven. This work which I am called to do with my hands or my mind I will accept as the first lesson given me in preparing for glory, honor and eternal life. This pain which I suffer, this pleasure which I enjoy, I will so use as to purify my immortal spirit and make me fit for the society of the world where there is no death. Always let me remember that my soul, my thinking, feeling, responsible self, can never die. Never may I do anything which I shall wish undone ever so many ages hence."

The earth can teach us in some measure what value the infinite God attaches to the immortal soul of man. It must be an exalted being for whom God would work so many ages in preparing a temporary home; on whom he would confer such vast riches; for whose support he would pour forth such abundance; to whose dominion he would subject all other creatures in this world. And still more. This earth has been trodden by the blessed feet of the incarnate Son of God. His voice of prayer has been lifted up in its

solitudes. He drank of its gushing springs. He climbed its hills and mountain paths. He rested beneath the shade of its trees and beside its wells of water. He went forth to toil with its morning light. He endured the heat of its burning noon. He slept under the shadow of its night. The homes of earth have been comforted by his sympathizing tears. The dust of earth has been consecrated by his sacrificial blood. The graves of earth have been hallowed by his repose in the tomb. The triumph of the soul over the power which destroys the body has been demonstrated by his resurrection from the dead.

And in many succeeding ages the earth has been consecrated by the blood of martyrs who believed in Jesus. The prisons and caverns and solitudes of earth have been made holy by the faith of captives and exiles who suffered for Jesus. The homes and treasures and toils and afflictions of earth have been blessed by the presence of those who walked with God. Outcast and accursed as would be this earth if given up to man's sin, it is made holy by the sacrifice of the cross, and we may present all its riches and resources as a pure offering to God in the name of Jesus. This earth is visited by angels. It is in constant communication with heaven. The daily prayer goes up from millions of hearts, and the daily answer of blessing comes down. Messengers of mercy are constantly coming, and the intelligence which they carry back causes joy in the presence of the angels.

All power in the earth is given unto the Son of God, and he will shortly subdue all things in the earth unto himself.

In such a world, consecrated by the cross of Christ, it must be our highest and happiest life to live by faith on the Son of God. He is Head over all things, and the best and noblest use we can make of our faculties and possessions will be to consecrate them to him. He has made the most astonishing sacrifice in our behalf, and he has the right to expect that nothing shall come between our hearts and him. The true greatness and joy of living must come from living with the great destiny of a redeemed and immortal life ever in view. All that God has done for the world in creation and redemption has been done to draw our hearts to him. We have only to open our ears to the voices with which he speaks to us in his providence and his word, and we shall feel that we have his presence in all the walks of life. Strength and guidance and consolation will be given us in every time of need. This earthly pilgrimage will be a safe and happy journey to a better home.

The High Rock.

Lead me to the Rock that is higher than I.—Ps. lxi. 2.

XXI.

THE HIGH ROCK.

THE divine law was given to man written by the finger of God upon tablets of stone. The revelation was in the language which God had taught in Paradise, and the writing was upon material which God made when he made the world. The principles of the law were from everlasting, and the tablets upon which it was written were as old as the solid substance of the globe. The holy place, where the Divine voice spake and an unseen hand delivered the written stone into the hands of a man, was a sanctuary of rocks.

No fluted columns nor sculptured walls, no pictured dome nor long-drawn aisle, no work of art or of man's device, adorned the awful scene of the divine legation. The Ancient of Days was enthroned upon the rock, and his temple was the high place of the hills when he gathered the tribes around his seat and gave forth laws for the government of the world. The pillars of that awful sanctuary were splintered peaks, heaved up by the inner fires of the earth and sculptured by the storms; the walls were naked crags rough-hewn and

hoary with centuries of age; the sky was the dome; the clouds hung their drapery around; and when the Divine Legislator descended to his throne of rock and gave forth his law upon tablets of stone, the proclamation was made in mighty thunderings, the mountains did quake and the everlasting hills bowed in worship.

From that time forth the rock in Horeb became a holy place to all readers of the Scriptures, and the sacredness attached to that ancient sanctuary of the mountains made without hands became associated permanently in devout minds with the rock. It was only the abuse of a just and sacred feeling that led the self-torturing ascetic to make his home in a cave of the rocks, and to think it a holier place than the home consecrated by daily duty and pure affection. All that science has learned of the laws of Nature, and all that history has recorded of the past, leads us to look with religious veneration upon the ancient rocks.

The successive steps by which God built up a world, and made it habitable for man from the dark and formless void, are recorded upon the rocks. The strata that go down in orderly succession deeper than the deepest mine, and the fossil remains of sea-shells piled high as the mountains, tell us all that we know of the mode in which the Divine Architect lifted the present beautiful order of hills and valleys and plains out of the deep. Whoever would read the creative work of the six unmeasured days in Genesis, must study the tablet stone.

Many of the great and critical events in the world's history since it became a home for man take us back to the munitions of the rocks and the sanctuaries built without hands. Many of the most precious and consoling promises of divine revelation are set forth under the similitude of a rock. When, in a meditative mood, we look upon a great rock old as the centuries, or upon a humble memorial stone set up by human hands, we are reminded of truths and scenes and events that stir our hearts with the most profound and sacred emotion. It is, therefore, entirely proper and natural that we should still try to draw living streams of divine instruction from the rock, both in its literal and symbolical character, even as Moses brought refreshing waters for the thirsty tribes from the rock in Horeb. And every line of truth, followed up to its true source, will lead us to the Rock of Ages.

There is much to be said of the rock or common stone as a sacred memorial. When Jacob journeyed from Beersheba to Padan-aram, he lighted upon a solitary place as the shadows of evening gathered round him, and he laid down for the night to sleep, with the heavens for a covering, and the bare earth for a bed, and the rough stones of the roadside for a pillow. And there he dreamed that a shining pathway rose from earth to heaven in his sight, and angels were coming and going as multitudes meet and pass on the crowded street. Above, was the glory of Jehovah, and the voice which called to Abraham out of heaven

called to him with words of promise and protection. When the lonely wanderer waked out of sleep, and rose up early in the morning to renew his journey, it seemed to him that the vision of the night had made the solitary place the house of God and the gate of heaven. And there he set up a memorial stone, to remind him in subsequent years of the night when the Lord God of his fathers Abraham and Isaac met him in the way to Padan-aram. And when he returned with great riches to the land of his inheritance, he sought out the place of that anointed stone, and there he set up an altar to the God that answered him in the day of his distress. And from that time forth the tenth of all he had he gave to God.

This is the true way for men to make holy places in all time and in all the earth. Let them commemorate the hour when God met them in their wanderings with messages of peace. And it would be well for all who make good promises in the time of trouble and distress to set up a memorial of their vows and to keep the covenant made in affliction ever before them in the day of prosperity. It were better that all our good promises made in our best or darkest moments should be graven with a pen of iron and in the rock for ever, than that they should be forgotten when the world surrounds us with its temptations and this earthly life promises all that we want.

It were well for us all to set up a sacred memorial of the time of distress and agony, when we offered up

the prayer, "Oh God, deliver me from going down to the grave," and the prayer was heard; of the time when poverty came upon us like an armed man, and we vowed, if ever prosperity should return, to give the tenth of all our gains to God; of the time when the Spirit touched our hearts and we had great joy and peace in our souls, and we were ready to answer to every call of duty, "Lord, here am I; send me."

All have remembrances of times when the kingdom of heaven was brought very nigh, and it seemed an easy and a blessed thing to enter. All have been met in the journey of life by special providences of the Almighty God, even as Jacob was addressed by the Divine voice at Bethel. All have resolved, in moments of tender feeling and awakened conscience, to lead better lives and to walk more closely with God. Let a memorial of such hours and experiences be kept freshly in mind, as if you had graven them upon stone and set them in your habitation to be ever before you. Go back to the best hour you ever had in all your life, and take it up and bear it with you in the future, as the wind bears the cloud and the cloud bears the rain. Let the promise which pain and poverty or peace and pardon drew from your trembling heart be the memorial of past mercies and the watchword of duty in the future. And so from all your wanderings you shall come back to a holier sanctuary than Jacob found at Bethel, and to a greater inheritance than his posterity possessed in the land of Canaan.

And this custom of preserving sacred memorials of the past is as appropriate and profitable to communities and nations as to individuals. The people that have no history can have no power. The people that forget the past and dishonor the ashes of their fathers, will leave nothing for others to remember when they are gone. The earth to which the martyrs of truth and liberty have given their blood is holy ground. Pilgrims from far-distant lands go there to weep and to kindle the fire of feelings and purposes with which they inflame the world. The dungeon where the persecuted prisoner has for years trodden the length of his chain backward and forward, until his bare feet have worn a path in the cold stone, becomes a sanctuary and the damp floor an altar, and every mark upon the rocky pavement and mouldering wall appeals from earth to heaven, from man to God.

When Joshua, the captain of the conquering tribes of Israel, had reached a good old age and was about to die, he gathered the chief men of the nation under an oak that stood beside the sanctuary of the Lord in Shechem. There he took a great stone and set it up under the tree, and over it he rehearsed God's marvelous dealings with the nation in bringing them out of Egypt and giving them the goodly land of Palestine. There he made them renew their solemn covenant to put away all strange gods and to serve the Lord alone for ever. Then he said, "Behold, this stone shall be a witness unto us. For it hath heard all the words of

the Lord which he spake unto us. It shall therefore be a witness unto you, lest ye deny your God." It would have been well for Israel in after years if they had gathered oftener beneath the shade of that sacred oak in Shechem and listened to the dumb testimony of that witnessing stone against all their departures from the living God.

The great conflicts and mighty sorrows and unuttered joys through which individuals and nations are carried forward in the path of light and salvation are things to be remembered. They are lessons which cost too much to be often repeated or soon forgotten. The memorial which binds us to the great heroisms and mighty sacrifices of the past is a promise of better things in the future. Every nation that stands for the defence of the right and the truth must have a history of conflicts and sacrifices. Every free and consecrated land must have many stones of witness, rocks of testimony, over which the people should remember and rehearse the dealings of God's providence with their fathers in the days of darkness and conflict.

In our own land there are stones that heard the roar of battle and the shout of charging hosts when the genius of American freedom walked upon the high places of the field, and her voice was heard in thunder to the ends of the earth. There are hoary rocks that

> "Keep watch by the bed of the glorious dead,
> With the solemn stars at night."

There are cliffs above the clouds, and caves among the

hills, and defiles among the mountains, where men died the death of martyrdom for their country. And it is due to their valor and their devotion that the memorial of their deeds should be written with a pen of iron in the rock for ever. And if ever the nation should forget its high calling to keep the ark of truth and liberty safe and sacred for the world, then the rocks that heard the last prayer of the martyred dead, and the stones of the field where men bled for their country, will cry out in indignation.

The rocks have ever been a refuge for the exiled and persecuted benefactors of mankind. When David fled from the face of the demon-haunted Saul, he sought a hiding-place in the rocks. When Jezebel had sworn to make the life of Elijah a sacrifice to her heathen gods within twenty-four hours, the prophet hurried in wild dismay, day and night, over the whole length of the Arabian desert, until he had hidden himself in the rock of Horeb. When the Son of God appeared on earth for the redemption of the world, the first shelter of his feeble infancy was found in a cave of the rocks. When the early Christians were hunted down like wild beasts, they made for themselves homes and sanctuaries in the rocks of the mountains and in stony excavations beneath the surface of the ground.

So the rocks have many times afforded a refuge for men of whom the world was not worthy. In times of darkness and peril the instructors and benefactors of mankind have been found in caverns and dungeons

more frequently than in palaces. The rough work of pulling men out of the fire and saving them has not ordinarily been done in silken robes nor with strict attention to the refinements of taste. Rude John Bunyan sent forth a voice from Bedford jail which has compassed the earth in many languages and directed millions of pilgrims on their way to the Heavenly City. In the rocky chamber of the Wartburg, Martin Luther translated the Bible into his native tongue, the rude and strong speech which he learned in the miner's cottage under the shadow of the Thuringian forest; and, putting that wild torchlight into peasants' hands, he scattered the darkness of ignorance and superstition and awoke all Europe from the sleep of ages. In the rocky cave of Bethlehem, Jerome transferred the ancient Scriptures into the living Latin of his time, and so gave utterance to the word of God for the millions of the world-embracing Roman empire. Paul is believed by many to have sent forth from the rocky dungeon of the Mamertine prison those great words of faith and victory which for eighteen hundred years have nerved martyrs at the stake and opened heaven to the vision of the dying. The forerunner of Christ cried in the desert, and sent forth a warning voice from the rocks of the wilderness, which awakened in the hearts of the Jewish people renewed expectations of their coming Messiah.

And so always, in the great eras of history, the instructors and benefactors of mankind have been bau-

ished and imprisoned, and the world has been indebted to caverns and dungeons for voices which have arrested its own progress in the pathway of ruin. If you would go back to the starting-point of great truths and mighty reformations, you must stand with the shivering band of pilgrims on the bare rock of an ice-bound coast; you must worship with hunted fugitives in the glens and caverns of wild mountains; you must look for Galileo and Bunyan and Bonnivard in the gloom of the dungeon; you must go down into the chamber of horrors and see men tortured, not accepting deliverance that they may be faithful to the truth; you must thread the subterranean galleries of the Catacombs, and hear the cheerful songs of men who must hide themselves in the earth because they would be faithful to their Master in heaven; you must stand in the bloody arena and see men torn in pieces by wild beasts, while the applause of a hundred thousand spectators rises hoarse and horrible as the roar of the deep upon a rocky shore. To such sources must we trace the streams that now carry healing and salvation round the earth. The new day of light and liberty has been ushered in by men who were compelled to wander in deserts and mountains and to seek homes in dens and caves of the earth. If we have reason to hope for better things in the future, it is simply because some have been found ready to suffer the loss of all things for the testimony of Jesus in the past. When the sea shall give up its dead in the final day, and deserts shall

bear witness to the sufferings and prayers of Christian exiles, it will be seen that many times in the world's history truth found its only refuge in the sanctuary of the mountains and the munitions of the rocks.

It is said in the Scriptures of a good king that he should be as a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest. Such men are the kings for conscience' sake, monarchs and martyrs in the imperial realm of truth—men who would rather die than do wrong. One such man is a covert from the tempest for millions. It is such kings of righteousness that stand as rock-built lighthouses on the great deep of human passion to guide all wanderers in the safe way.

There is a lighthouse, well known to navigators of the British Channel, standing in so peculiarly exposed a situation that none can fail to wonder how it keeps its place. After a storm has ceased, and there is not the slightest breeze to ruffle the face of the deep, so strong is the ground swell of the sea against the base of the structure that the waves dash up with a tremendous roar to the full height of the tower, and envelop the topmost light in a canopy of foam. And when the tempest is abroad in its wrath, and the ship flies before the fury of the storm, and eager watchers are waiting the wreck on the shore, then the remorseless deep, as if enraged against the beacon-light which disappoints it of its prey by warning the mariner of the fatal rock, dashes with a still mighter force and louder thunder against that strong-built tower to bury it beneath the

waves. And so, night and day, summer and winter, for more than a hundred years, the great deep, with all its force of wind and waves, in breeze and gale and storm, has been mining at the foundations and storming at the battlements of that beacon in vain. It falls not, for it is founded upon a rock. The lonely light-keeper, confident in the tried strength of the column by which his narrow chamber is supported, sleeps sound while the storm roars around him and the multitude of the billows lift up their voices on high. And the mariner, returning from his long voyage to the most distant lands and the uttermost parts of the sea, as confidently expects to see the light of that still shining beacon as he does to recognize the hills and shores of his native land rising to view from the waste of waters.

So stands the righteous man resting upon the eternal rock of God's truth—a guide and a covert to many others amid the war of opinion and the tempests of passion with which the earth is shaken. It is only because God has given the world such men in the past that we have peace in our time and the hope of better things for the future. And nothing is so worthy of the loftiest and purest ambition of the human heart as to be able to stand firm as a rock when the strongholds of truth are assailed by many foes and the sacred interests of humanity are endangered by false or feeble friends.

A lonely, rocky headland standing out from the Grampian Hills in Scotland is called Crag Ellachie.

The Clan Grant, whose turf cottages are in sight of its hoary head, have adopted for their war-cry, "Stand fast, Crag Ellachie!" The wild warriors of the hills serving in the armies of England have carried that cry around the world. And every time it runs along the line in making the terrible charge or resisting the fierce attack, the brave Highlanders assume to themselves the steadfastness of the rock which looks down upon their own homes. The remembrance of that rugged and storm-beaten crag has nerved the heart of the Scottish soldier when shivering in the icy wind of the North or fainting in the noonday heat of tropical climes. Wherever the hour of peril finds him, and his thoughts wander away to the home of his childhood, the cry comes from that hoary rock, "Stand fast!" And so from all the defenders of the truth in all time there comes to us in the hour of trial and temptation the cry, "Stand fast!" The example of their constancy rises up amid all the conflicts of the past, like the rocky headland facing the storm or holding the beacon on the shore of the sea. Let us assume the strength of their faith and courage while we take up the cry that comes to us from far-distant ages, and give it new life and power by our fidelity, as we pass it on to all the tried and tempted—"Stand fast!"

In the Sacred Scriptures the rocks are the symbol of rest for the weary and of salvation for the soul. In the Lord Jehovah is the Rock of Ages. When the tribes of Israel were ready to perish of thirst in the

desert, the waters that saved them came forth from the smitten rock. The loftiest hymns of praise which were written for the people of God by inspired prophets and psalmists in ancient time exult in the Lord Jehovah as the Rock of Salvation. In all his troubles and perils, the sweet singer of Israel always rejoiced when he remembered the Rock of his strength and refuge in God.

This language becomes still more sacred and significant to us when we look to Christ as the Rock of Ages. In times of affliction and discouragement we all feel that our life is a pilgrimage through a waste in which there is much want and many sorrows. And we never know what it is to feel secure and at rest until we find in Christ a hiding-place from the wind and a covert from the tempest—until we flee to him as the traveler flees to the shadow of a great rock in a weary land.

I remember the description of one who learned to attach a new meaning to the prophet's words from his own experience in the wilds of Southern Africa. The fierce sun of noon poured down its scorching beams upon a treeless, herbless, lifeless waste. His feet sank in the burning sand as he walked. He looked in every direction for something to protect him from the insupportable heat. The least motion of the air felt like a blast of flame against his face. The waste of sand seemed like a sea of fire, and he grew faint and giddy with gazing upon its glimmering light. At length he saw a great rock leaning against the face of a still

higher cliff, leaving a sheltered spot of cool earth between the two. With all his remaining strength he fled for refuge to the offered shade. In addition to the protection of the rocky canopy, he found a cooling spring of water beneath. When he had slaked his thirst and reclined beneath the shadow of the great crag, he was prepared, Christian as he was, to sing with such fervor as never before—

> "Rock of Ages, cleft for me,
> Let me hide myself in thee."

Christ is the Rock of Ages, to whom all weary, thirsty, wandering souls are invited to come for rest. No floods or storms can carry away that safe and sure retreat. Amid all the changes and agitations of the world the Rock of our salvation stands firm. It has been beaten upon by the tempests of war; it has been assailed by the combined hosts of earth and hell; busy hands have been laboring for centuries to dig up its foundations. But the Rock of Ages stands to-day, amid all the wastes and conflicts of the world, offering rest to the weary and the water of life to the perishing. Never before were the reasons for trusting in Christ so many and so strong as they are to-day. Never before was it so hard for any man to excuse himself for not being a Christian. Among all the powers of the earth the kingdom of Christ is steadily advancing to its supreme and universal dominion. From all the discoveries of science, from all the achievements of art,

from all the stores of literature, from all the resources of industry, Christ is gathering trophies to increase the splendor of his many crowns. From the most profound experiences of the human soul; from the darkness and misery of unbelief and from the light and glory of faith, Christ is ever gathering confirmations of his power to save. The great joy of life, when life is spent in doing good, and the complete victory over death, when death is met in the strength of Christ, prove him to be a sufficient help in all our utmost need.

The Palm Tree.

The righteous shall flourish like the palm-tree.—Ps. xcii. 12.

XXII.

THE PALM TREE.

IF all the trees of the Bible, the cedar and the palm stand pre-eminent and alone. Both are sacred as the stones of the altar and the incense of the offering. Both are useful as the house that shelters the homeless and the bread that feeds the hungry. Both stand for the most exalted ideas of beauty, strength, virtue and immortality.

When God had crushed the pride of Egypt and led his chosen people out of bondage with a high hand, the emancipated tribes made their first encampment on the grand march to the promised land under the shadow of palms. And in all the subsequent ages of their history as a nation they kept the great feast of the Tabernacles in commemoration of the night when their fathers rested from their first day's march under tents of palm trees at Succoth. The deliverance of the Israelites from Egypt was the beginning of a moral revolution destined to roll in waves of light and liberty over the whole earth. The spreading branches of the tree that crowned the victor in the hour of triumph were the first and fittest covering for the people whose career

of conquest should extend through all time and embrace all nations.

When the sea was passed over, and the great host had gone three days' march into the desert—when the bitter waters of Marah were made sweet and the people had learned to live by every word from the mouth of the Lord—it was fitting again that they should rest under the palms of Elim and drink of the fountains that flowed beneath their shade—twelve springs for the twelve tribes, and seventy palms for the seventy elders of Israel, that every division of the great host in their subsequent numberings might believe itself to be named and counted in God's book of life. And ever since that day the palms and the fountains of Elim have stood forth in the vision of faith as the picture and the promise of rest.

So is it with us all in our pilgrimage to the heavenly Zion, whether it be a journey of forty years or of fourscore. First, is the wandering in the desert of a self-seeking and a disobedient life, in which the soul can find no rest; then the bitter waters of the world, of which we cannot drink; then sweet repose under the shadow of the Almighty and beside fountains that spring up into eternal life. When, therefore, the way seems long, and your path lies through a desert, and the springs that you find on the way are bitter to your taste, you have only to look forward with the vision of faith and you will see the palms of Elim waving you on with invitations; you have only to press forward

and you will soon rest beneath their shade and drink of sweet fountains.

When the tribes of Israel had finished their wanderings in the wilderness, they crossed the Jordan and began the conquest of the promised land with the City of Palms. The miraculous manna of the desert was no longer supplied to sustain the host when once they had tasted the fruit of the palm on the plains of Jericho. Thus the peril and the sorrow, the triumph and the joy in the early history of the chosen people, were kept alive in the memory of their posterity by the living monument of the palm. Whenever they saw its graceful branches waving in the valley of the Jordan or on the hillsides around Jerusalem, they were reminded of the day when the Lord went before their fathers through the waters of the sea and the wilds of the desert, and brought them safe to the land of their possession. Every year, at the great national feast of the Tabernacles, the covering shade of the palm reminded them that they were a providential people, and that their prosperity must depend upon their keeping faith in their fathers' God.

We see not the Hand which is guiding us, as Israel saw the pillar of the cloud and the fire; we hear not the Voice which spoke to them from the holy oracle. But we have only to look and to listen, and we shall be satisfied that the great Shepherd of Israel has been leading us all the way in the past, and the path of the future will be safe to all that follow him.

In the stormy days of disaster and conflict, when there was no king in the land, a queenly woman, by the simple force of her individual character, judged the tribes of Israel, and her seat of power and palace of justice was a solitary palm tree on the hills of Ephraim. She gathered the elders of the people for counsel under the green canopy of its widespreading leaves. Sitting beside that living sceptre of kingly command and prophetic authority, she justified the innocent and condemned the guilty. From that high sanctuary of the palm she sent forth a captain of the Lord's host whose name was Lightning, and who fell like a thunderbolt from the top of Tabor upon the armies of Jabin and Sisera in the battle-plain of Esdraelon.

Of all the trees of the Holy Land, the palm alone was sufficiently identified with the sacred history and religious faith of the Jewish people to be carved with cherubim and overlaid with gold in the temple of Solomon. The devout Hebrew who came to worship in the holy place approached the temple gates between lofty pillars whose capitals were wreathed with palms. He bathed his hands in water from a fountain of moulded palms. He passed through doors of fir tree whose panels were raised and figured with the carved fruit of the palm. He looked up to the lofty roof and he saw a canopy of branching palms. He passed the inner doors of the holy oracle, and he saw everywhere the sheltering palm and the shining cherubim in-

wrought with open flowers and overlaid with gold. When the prophet Ezekiel saw in vision the restored temple, which was to be a sanctuary for all nations and for all time, the palm and the cherubim were still there, graven upon the doors and the walls from the ground upward and through all the house. The tree which stands for the righteous men of earth was carved side by side with the holy ones of heaven, thus prefiguring the word of Christ, that those who follow him shall be equal unto the angels.

When Jesus sought repose from the crowded streets and the clamorous scribes of Jerusalem, he went out to the eastern slope of Olivet and rested at Bethany—the house of palms. That village home on the mountain-side where the Son of God was drawn by loving hearts, and where he was entertained by willing hands, received its name from the fruit that grew by the fountains of Elim and on the banks of the Jordan. The palms are gone from the paths of Olivet. Uncertain tradition alone points to a heap of ruins as the house of Lazarus. But the memory of Jesus in the home of Martha and of Mary has made Bethany a name of blessing for all lands and for all time. To this day we can wish nothing better for any home than that it may receive the Divine Guest who reposed in the village of palms on the slope of Olivet.

When Jesus came in triumph to Jerusalem, and the rejoicing multitude went forth to welcome their King, they strewed his path with the palms that crown the

conqueror, and they cried, "Hosanna! Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord." When the King of glory had submitted to the agony of the cross and the gloom of the grave, he ascended to his heavenly throne while walking with his disciples along the palm-girt path in the way to Bethany. The boughs that crown the victor waved their homage as he went up, and the silvery light of the cloud that received him out of their sight shone back upon their wondering eyes through the trembling branches of the palm. We are not surprised therefore to be told by the beloved disciple that when in the vision of heaven he saw a great multitude of the redeemed of earth before the throne, they waved palm branches in their hands as they led the choir of angels in ascribing glory and victory unto God and the Lamb for ever and ever.

The name given to the palm in Bible lands signifies standing erect like a column, shooting upward like a fountain, rising heavenward like a flame. And this describes the most striking aspect of the tree wherever it is seen in all the earth. It draws attention in the distance by its tall, straight, column-like trunk and its surmounting crown of luxuriant and graceful foliage. Its bright, feathery branches waving in the wind seem in the distance as delicate and as graceful as the plumes of the bird of Paradise. They never trail in the dust like the drooping boughs of the willow. They never lean for support, they never in-

terlace with the limbs of other trees, like the ivy. They are never burdened and broken down, like the oak, with the weight of climbing vines. They are never defaced with moss or mildew. The palm always rises pre-eminent above the rank and noxious vegetation of the marsh or stagnant pool, while it basks in the same sunshine and derives support from the same soil. Amid all the trees of the wood, the palm stands alone—tall, pure, ever stretching heavenward with its yearly growth. It rejoices in the sunlight when the skies are clear, and it smiles on the clouds when the skies are dark. Its long, flexible boughs wave to and fro and shiver in the storm, but the column-like trunk stands firm as a pillar of stone. Alone in the desert and beside the water-courses of the wilderness, it stands like a sentinel to guard the silent mountains by day and to watch the solemn stars by night. Rising above all other vegetation proudly eminent, the palm seems indifferent to the season and the soil. When the drought dries up the springs, and when the flooded streams fill the valleys, it is equally green and flourishing, and it casts the same kindly shade on the humblest traveler. Such is the palm as the desert pilgrim sees its feathery branches motionless in the breathless noon or waving in the breeze of the setting day.

And so stands the righteous man, firm on the post of duty, fearless in the time of danger, unmoved by the changing multitude, shedding a genial light upon

the lowly, yet keeping himself in pure and divine separation from the world. "Faithful found among the faithless," he keeps his loyalty and his love, while the passions and pollutions of the multitude swell and roar around him, "outrageous as a sea." He stands erect in his innocency, armed with the truth and rejoicing in the light and open day. If he bends before the storm, it is only to rise with new strength and beauty to his wonted stature when the tempest has expended its fury, as the palm is only the more firmly rooted and the more gracefully formed in lands where it is assailed by the fiercest winds. He stands as a beacon to warn mariners of the hidden shoal and the rocky shore. His silent example invites the thirsty to living waters, as the palm in the desert shows the pilgrim where springs may be found. His word of encouragement in the hour of despondency is like the shout of victory amid the roar of battle. In every enterprise the presence of a good man is the best promise of success. The cause to which he gives his life is the only cause that can never fail. And whether he dies alone or amid the plaudits of millions, his death is the greatest triumph.

Let skeptics scoff at the power of faith and the purity of religion. Let sophists strive with perverse ingenuity to set reason at variance with revelation. Let the selfish and the gain-seeking barter their souls for gold. Let the gay and the thoughtless make a jest of life Still, so long as there is a good man in

the world to live for God, the truth of the divine promise shall be demonstrated in him with power. He shall flourish like the most beautiful things that grow in the garden of God. In all greatness and purity of character, in all peace and joy of heart, the good man shall flourish like the palm. By silent and by outspoken separation from evil he shall testify against its subtilty and its power. By serene and sustained superiority of faith he shall overcome the world.

The light of heaven's blessing clothes the countenance of the upright man, like the sunbeams reflected from the shining foliage of the palm, and the moral waste around him blooms in his beneficence. He can mingle with men in all the walks of life, and go through all the haunts of wickedness upon errands of mercy and love, and yet keep his garments clean. Under his cultivation the barren desert brings forth immortal fruit, and the dark homes of the vile and wretched are cheered with light from heaven. He stands as a tower of strength upon the post of duty, to show the faithless that there is something to believe and the fearful that there is something to trust, even when heart and flesh fail and all earthly hope is cut off. The worldly and the wicked may rail at him in the day of their prosperity, but the worst of men will welcome his coming in the dark hour of affliction, and eyes dimmed with the shadows of death will look upon his face as if it were the face of an angel.

To the righteous man the life of duty and self-denial is precious and full of joy. He does not climb to the commanding heights of faith, as men climb the dazzling steep of fame, to find it more cheerless and cold the higher they go. He is drawn to every duty by love, and he finds in self-denial itself a foretaste of heaven. Even this present world, with all its storms and sorrows, is beautiful to him who walks with God, because he finds his Father's work at every step; he sees reflections of his Father's love in all the pleasant things brought forth by the sun, and he delights in the beauties and glories of creation as if they were all his own.

Such is the character of the man to whom the Bible gives the promise—"He shall flourish like the palm tree." Such is the character which every one can make his own. This is what the world wants more than anything else to preserve the peace of society, to lighten the burdens of the weary, to increase the attractions of home, to ensure the happiness of the human race. We could indeed do much to improve the world with money if we had more of it. Sound health would make life a new experience to many, if they only knew how to get it. Every acquisition of knowledge is an increase of power to make ourselves and others happy. But far more than money and health and knowledge the world needs righteousness, purity, faith. To secure every needed reformation, to enjoy the highest luxuries of light, liberty and pro-

ness, the world wants honest men—men that are true to the very core—men that hate all forms of falsehood and insincerity before God and man with a perfect hatred.

Let the aspiring youth make it the highest aim of his ambition to be a righteous man, and he need not be anxious about anything else. The immutable God has promised that all other things shall be theirs who seek the kingdom of God first. The world is full of disappointment and misery, just because men are afraid to believe that God will be as good as his word, when he says that no good thing shall be withholden from them that walk uprightly. Let it be the first and great concern of parents to train up their children to virtue and piety, and they need have no fear about their success in the world. Let it always be assumed and maintained in the daily conversation of the family that the path of duty is the path of pleasure, purity of heart, perfect uprightness of life, is the seal and crown of honor, and then parents would seldom be disappointed in their children, and the humblest earthly home would be the vestibule of heaven.

The palm grows from within outward. The new deposit of matter which is to enlarge its dimensions and increase its strength comes directly from the vital process which is going on at the heart. Though the surface may seem hard and rigid, yet the central portion of the trunk is soft and pliant, and at the same time full of that mysterious and unconquerable vitality

which is the source of strength and growth and life to the whole tree. With the other and much larger class of trees the process of growth is the reverse of this. In them the heart may be hard as iron or dead as stone, while the outside appears green and flourishing. The whole vitality of the tree may be employed in giving the surface the appearance of life, while the heart is utterly gone and the trunk is nothing but a shell.

The spiritual life of the righteous man has its seat in the heart, and displays its force from within outward. His external aspect may sometimes seem rigid and cold, but there is warmth and tender sensibility within. The heart of the good man is the best of him; of the bad man, it is the worst. It is sometimes said of wicked men that they are good at heart, after all. If they were, there would be little need of the apology. The heart makes the man, and the outward life is only the fruit of seed sown within.

The palm in Oriental countries chooses its place of growth beside the running streams or fountains of water. The desert ranger toiling over the waste of burning sand, half maddened by the fierce beams of the pitiless sun, and feeling in his heart the horrible aspect of the desolation and death that reign around him, sees afar over the glimmering ridges of sand the feathery palm lift its green coronal to the sky, and at once his strength revives and his voice breaks forth in song. Even the brute camel hails the palm groves of

the desert with a joy that makes his chafing burden light and kindles new life in every weary limb. And the wild wanderers of the East name both the tree and the fountain beneath its shade among the choicest gifts of God. Give the Arab and his camel the palm and the spring, and both are provided with plenty in the desert.

And indeed the palm in some one of its thousand species answers almost every want of the more cultivated man in civilized homes. It cools the air in summer with fans, and it warms the house in winter with fires. It shields the head from the rays of the sun when riding, and it protects the feet from the thorns of the desert when walking. It supplies tools and aprons for the workman, chairs and beds for the weary, biers and coffins for the dead. It is made into shutters and blinds to keep the light out by day, and it supplies lamps and oil to keep the light within by night. It is wrought into books and paper for the student, bows and arrows for the warrior, lines and nets for the fisherman, sails and cordage for the seaman, food and medicine for everybody. The Oriental traveler is carried in a palanquin of palm, his goods are packed in bags and baskets of palm, he reposes at noon under the shade of the palm, his food is cooked and brought him in vessels of palm, he sleeps at night on a mattress of palm, in a room that is roofed and curtained and carpeted with palm. Some species of this wonderful tree must find a place in every picture of the

Oriental world, and some one or more of its many uses must form a part of every day's experience of life in tropical climes. If the palm should be taken from the bright lands of the sun, the wild beasts would howl with hunger in the jungle, famine would enter millions of human homes and the wanderer would die in the desert.

The righteous man is like the palm in the multitude of blessings with which he enriche the world. One good man in a great city may save it from destruction; one good man in a great cause may ensure its triumph; one good man in a dark day may bring back the sun. Let it be known that good men are making their home in a certain village, and every house in that village will be worth more than it cost its owner. Let it be known that good men are taking stock in any company, and every share of that stock will rise in the market. Men do not serve God for pay, and yet godliness alone is great gain and is profitable unto all things. The wealth of the world is in its good men, and there would be little left worth living for if the faithful should fail from among the children of men. Let the earth be enriched with the increase of righteous men and all poverty and wretchedness will pass away. Great cities will be crowded with happy millions, countless villages will shine with happy homes, the earth will bring forth a hundred-fold, the waste will be inhabited, there will be highways in the wilderness and the desert will become like the garden of the Lord.

The Bible compares the wicked to thorns and briers, and both are the opposite of the palm. Thorns pierce the flesh and rend the garments, and their end is only to be burned. Briers and brambles creep upon the ground like the serpent. They never run in a straight course, but through a thousand tortuous turns and windings. They enfold and strangle the branches of the tree upon which they depend for support. They hedge up the path of the traveler. They conceal their hooked spines in the smooth grass, that they may pierce the foot and tear the flesh of those who walk with a heedless step. So wickedness creeps like the serpent and crouches like the beast of prey. So it hedges up the way of the upright, and weaves snares to bring him down to its own level. It puts forth soft and pliant tendrils only the more certainly to strangle and destroy in the end. The foliage of the brier and the bramble is smooth and glistening, but the fair covering of green leaves conceals a whole armory of spears and daggers beneath. The enchanting bower which they form with their climbing vines is the favorite haunt of the venomous serpent and the hiding-place of the birds and beasts of prey.

Thus the sacred similitudes of the Bible set before us the true characters of men. The one stands upright and loves the day like the palm—the other shuns the light and creeps on the ground like the bramble. The two are in perpetual conflict with each other The palm alone shall win the day and wear the

crown. Truth is stronger than error. Righteousness shall prevail over wrong. All greatness, strength and excellence of character come from believing the truth, defending the right, doing the duty which God commands.

Milton makes the fallen angel say, "To be weak is to be miserable." It is indeed a sentiment most likely to come from the mouth of demons, and worthy to be urged in the councils of hell. To be wicked is to be miserable. To be righteous is to be strong and happy. The just man has nothing to fear from force or fraud so long as he keeps his loyalty and his love. Strong and terrible as have been the masters of iniquity in this world, they would have been greater and mightier if they had been just. The one Person who has exerted most influence in the affairs of men thus far was meek and lowly in disposition, holy, harmless, undefiled in life. Long as wickedness has filled the high places of power in the earth, there is a time coming when righteousness shall receive the palm of triumph, and those who were accounted weak and defenceless shall be crowned conquerors and more than conquerors.

In the glorious vision of the Apocalypse we can see them even now. They are before the throne, walking in the splendors of the sunless and eternal day. Not a feeble and scattered company, but a multitude which no man can number. Not of one sect or class, but of all nations and kindreds and people and tongues. Not

the self-indulgent and the time serving. They have come out of great tribulation, and they have trodden the fiery furnace of all earthly affliction when it was heated seven-fold. They have come from dungeons and scaffolds, from garrets and hovels. They have passed through sore conflict and deep self-denial and bitter disappointment. No longer poor, struggling, sorrowing, they are clothed in richer robes than earthly kings ever wore. They are crowned with more costly diadems than conquerors ever won. The days of pain and want and weeping are past. They burst forth in song, loud as the thunder of the sea, "sweet as from blest voices uttering joy," and they wave palms of victory in their hands as they sing, "Salvation unto our God that sitteth upon the throne, and unto the Lamb!" And all the blest inhabitants of heaven, angel and archangel, cherub and burning seraph, echo back the refrain of that victorious song, saying, "Amen; blessing and glory and wisdom and thanksgiving and honor and power and might be unto our God, for ever and ever!"

In that great day of supreme and final triumph it will be seen that righteousness was strong, and wickedness, in all its forms and with all its pride, was only another name for failure and defeat. Contrasted with the crown of righteousness, the most successful career of wrong will be shame and everlasting contempt. In that great assembly the loudest voice and the sweetest song will be theirs who have done and suffered most

for Christ. If you would stand in that glorious company and sing the victor's song, you must be girt with righteousness and purity as with a garment—you must be clothed in robes which have been made white in the redeeming blood of the Lamb. You must not shrink from the conflicts and the scars through which Christ himself has passed to the heavenly throne.

The Cedar of Lebanon.

The righteous shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon.—Ps. xcii. 12.

XXIII.

THE CEDAR OF LEBANON.

THE cedar of Lebanon holds a kingly rank among all the trees of the Bible. It was most widely known and revered by all the inhabitants of the Holy Land. It belongs to a class of trees that have traveled with man in all his migrations and found a home in all the climes of the earth. The cedar, the pine, the fir, the spruce, the larch, all belong to one family which has its representatives in the sweltering heat of the Tropics and amid the icy rigors of the Arctic zone. In every land its leaves are always green. At every season the wind plays the same sweet and melancholy strain upon its needle-shaped foliage, like the murmur of waves upon a far-off coast. Whether crowning the cold height of the mountain, covering the ridge of the storm-swept hill, marching in scattered troops over the broad plain, or crowding into the narrow space of the sheltered valley, the pines, the firs and the cedars love the sunshine, yet laugh at the storm; they flourish in the heat, yet defy the cold; they rejoice in the rivers and fountains of water, and yet grow upon the sandy waste and

plant their roots among barren rocks. They are bright and green all winter when everything else is dead; and they put on new garments to welcome the spring when everything else is fresh and gay.

In this great family of princes the cedar is sovereign and sacred. It has been crowned and consecrated by the Divine Hand and set over all the trees of the wood as their king. The inspired writers use it most frequently in illustrating the meaning and power of spiritual truth. It is called the tree of the Lord, and it is named and numbered among the most excellent and beautiful of God's works in the world.

According to the Hebrew classification, the whole range of vegetation was comprised in the descent from the lofty cedar of Lebanon to the lowly hyssop that springeth out of the wall. None but the kings and princes of the land could dwell in houses of cedar. When God would promise the greatest prosperity to Israel, he declared that he would make the cedar to grow in the dry places of the wilderness. It would indeed even now bring back the days of her ancient glory to Palestine could the royal cedar once more cover the heights of Lebanon and hide the nakedness of her burnt and barren hills. The cedar would gather the clouds from the distant sea and pour down the rain upon the parched fields, and the whole air perfumed with its balsam would seem as if it had been breathed upon by "Sabean odors from the spicy clime of Araby the blest."

In the Song of Songs it is set forth as the height of refined and romantic luxury to dwell in houses the doors of which are paneled with cedar, or to go out in the blooming spring and camp in the green pastures beneath the perfumed boughs of the spreading cedar. Now, the harassed and dispirited inhabitants of the Holy Land have little disposition to make a holiday on the hillsides, and they would search in vain to find a grove of cedars where they once grew in numbers like the olive and in luxuriance like the vine. When Balaam, the prophet of the East, looked from the mountains of Moab upon the tents of the tribes camped in the plains below, and the Spirit of God came upon him and constrained him to pronounce the richest blessing upon the chosen people that had come out of Egypt, he said: "How goodly are thy tabernacles, O Israel! They are spread forth like gardens by the river's side, like cedar trees which the Lord hath planted beside the waters." His fervid imagination, kindled at the fiery fountain of the sun in the lands of the East, could picture nothing more beautiful than groves of cedars stirred by the wind of the morning and waving their green boughs in the valleys.

When the sacred chroniclers would describe the riches and splendor of the reign of Solomon, they tell us that he made the precious cedars in Jerusalem to be as the common sycamore tree in the vale for abundance. The most magnificent of all the kings of Israel marked his reign by the culture of the most kingly among the

trees, and by covering the public walks and chariot-courses around his capital with its shadow. The Psalmist, in the day of national affliction, describes the former prosperity of his people by saying that the vine of the Lord's planting covered the hills with its shadow and put forth its boughs like the cedars of God.

In another passage, remarkable for its picturesque and stirring beauty of expression, the Psalmist describes the might and fury of a thunder-storm, pouring its torrents and discharging its arrowy lightnings upon the forests among the mountains, by saying that the voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon. The resistless power of Him who rideth upon the whirlwind was manifest in crushing the monarch of the forests on its mountain throne. So conspicuous was the glory of the cedar in the heights of Lebanon that when it fell and was trodden down by the wrath of the storm, the wilderness shook with the sound of its crashing branches; the fir trees and the oaks of Bashan howled with dismay; the mountain mourned as if shorn of its glory, and the trees of the forest fainted at the loss of their king. The young lions roared with terror in their secret dens, and the shepherds of the distant valleys lifted up their voices in lamentations. So the prophets spoke of the cedar in moments of the loftiest inspiration, and the common language of the people gave equal pre-eminence to the royal tree.

The kings of Israel and of Judah are repeatedly

described under the emblem of a cedar. When the king of Babylon came with his armies against Jerusalem and took away her king and princes to his own land, the prophet Ezekiel describes the conquest and captivity in the terms of this parable: "A great eagle, with great wings, long-winged, full of feathers, which had divers colors, came unto Lebanon and took the highest branch of the cedar. He cropped off the top of its young twigs and carried it into a land of traffic." The same prophet describes the pride and power of the Assyrian monarch in another parable of like import: "Behold the Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature, and his top was among the thick boughs. The waters made him great, the deep set him up on high, with his rivers running round about his plants. Therefore, his height was exalted above all the trees of the field, and his boughs were multiplied, and his branches became long because of the multitude of waters when he shot forth. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his branches did all the beasts of the field bring forth their young, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations. Thus was he fair in his greatness, in the length of his branches, for his root was by great waters. The fir trees were not like his boughs, and the chestnut trees were not like his branches: not any tree in the garden of God was like him in his beauty."

Such is the rank of royal excellence and dignity

accorded to the cedar among all the trees of the forest by the common usage of the Scriptures. The inspired writers exhaust all the resources of language in describing the beauty and pre-eminence of the sacred tree, and then they say that any man who lives to do his duty to God shall grow like the cedar in Lebanon. The righteous man is the king of men. The highest rank belongs to him who walks humbly with God. The lowliest disciple of Jesus is a candidate for higher honors than the voice of the people or the vote of Congress can confer upon the most favored child of fortune. He is the heir of a greater inheritance than the wealth of the world can buy;

> "The noblest creature seen below,
> Ordained to fill a throne above:
> God gives him all he can bestow-
> His kingdom of eternal love."

It does not make a man a king to place a crown on his head and a sceptre in his hand. He may have all the showy and captivating signs of royalty and yet be a slave. There have been many such, and they were the more miserable because the fetters they wore were golden and their prison was a palace. If a man be not already noble in heart and character, no crowning can make him king, no place or rank or power can give him a seat among the sons of the Highest. The great study of character is to find out what makes men great in the sight of God, and to give the highest honor to those who stand highest in the books of Heaven.

Man in his sinful state has fallen away from his divine lineage, and yet he cannot wholly forget it. While looking earthward and groping in the dust, he can still see faint reflections of the heavenly crown offered him from above. The most abject slave of the world knows that he ought to be a king and conquer the power that carries him captive. However far the wanderer may go from God, there is an earnest voice ever whispering within, "Return to thy Father's house." The beautiful shell that was formed in the depths and rolled on the floor of the sea may be carried away to the mountains or stored for years in the cabinet of the university. But still, if held to the ear, it will murmur of its home in the deep, it will thrill with the music of waves that break on its native shore. So the soul, that was made to be a king unto God and to reign for ever in the boundless realm of a blessed life, may fall away from that high and glorious rank and sink to the shame and misery of a slave. And yet inward voices will whisper of the lost throne which is still waiting for him among the sons of the morning—solemn convictions will awaken the need of a higher service and a better home. In the far country, where the wanderer disowns the royalty of his nature and wastes the treasures of his heart, he has longings and self-accusings, the crushing burden and the bitter want of an unsatisfied soul to bring him back to his forsaken kingdom and dishonored crown.

No man can repress and stifle the heaven-born in-

stinct of his spiritual nature without a violent strain upon his conscience and his heart. In the right use of his endowments he must be always lifting himself up to a higher and better life. He must make all his studies pleasures, toils, steps on which to climb in the ascending way to glory and to God. The dignities of this world are too mean, the range of earthly interests too low, too limited for the desires and aspirations which God created within us when he breathed into our souls the breath of immortality. It will cost any man a severe struggle, a blind and bitter conflict with his better self, before he can give up his divine lineage and be content to have his name written in the dust.

You may plant the cone of a California pine in a vase of earth, and cover it with a globe of glass, and set it in your southern window, so as to catch the light and warmth of the sun, and while you keep the few handfuls of earth moist the pine will grow till it reaches the highest point of the circumscribing glass, and it will search all round the inner surface to find some way out of its crystalline prison; and for a while it will press with all its vital force to escape into the free air and shoot toward heaven. But if the glass be strong enough to resist the pressure, the branches will turn back to the earth from which they sprang, the stunted pine will soon cease to grow, and after a few summers of sickly life it will wither down to the root. But plant the same seed in its native soil, and give it the stimulus of changing seasons and refreshing show-

ers and genial sunshine, and it will go on, lifting its branches higher and higher toward heaven, for hundreds and thousands of years, until it forms the loftiest pile of living verdure on the face of the earth.

So a man may plant his most cherished hopes upon a little spot of earth which he calls his own, and close himself in with the glazed covering of worldly expediencies, occupations, pleasures and anxieties, and for a while he will have strong impulses to break through the thin walls of his prison and come forth to a larger and freer life. But in the end, if he keeps the covering on, all his growth will be downward; he will reach only a dwarfed and sickly life, and he will die, as if his soul went back to the dust with the body which it animated. But let the man break forth from the contracted circle of a worldly life, let him cultivate hopes and aspirations worthy of his immortal destiny, let him learn to look upon God as his Father and himself as the heir of the whole boundless creation, and he shall grow in greatness and in joy beyond the reach of his loftiest thought; he shall be made a king unto God and shall reign for ever.

The royal distinction of the righteous man does not indeed always agree with present appearances. It is contrary to the prevailing opinions and expectations of men. It is only after sore discipline and severe instruction that the heir of glory himself learns to wear his divine honors with the grace and dignity becoming his high rank. We are prone to judge of things as they

seem to our senses. We are governed by the opinions and usages that prevail around us. And thus we fail to see that bare citizenship in the kingdom of heaven confers an immeasurable and everlasting superiority over all the possessions and glories of earth and time. The mighty conqueror rides forth in the whirlwind of battle and millions mourn beneath the stroke of his thunderbolts, and yet the world reads his history with raptures of admiration.

Come with me and I will show you a greater man. Tread lightly, for it is the chamber of death that we enter. Let all trifling thoughts be put away, for we are in the presence of the mightiest of conquerors, and the awful shadow of eternity is upon us. Let our words be few, for we must speak in the hearing of one who an hour hence will stand before the throne of the Infinite God. There he lies, an unknown sufferer, upon a humble couch, wasted with disease and racked with pain. The pallid hue of death is on his brow and an unearthly light is in his eye. Physicians have exhausted the resources of their art, and retired with the confession that the patient is in the hands of a mightier Power than their own. Weeping friends are standing around his bed to see him die. The last requests have been made and the words of farewell have been spoken. The chamber is as solemn as if one had only to step through the door to pass into eternity.

And yet this man, for whom the light of another

morning will never shine, is the most calm and peaceful one in all the company. He never felt so rich, never was so well satisfied with his condition, never had such high expectations in all his life, as he has now that he is just about to die. It would seem to him like mockery if you should offer him all the wealth and glories of the world. He is already a king, and the robes of his coronation are ready for him to put on. He is just about to enter the most august assemblage in the universe. He will be received as the peer of angels, the companion of the greatest and the mightiest that ever lived in all time. He will hear the voice of One who has everything to give, saying, "Come, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world." And all this is true just because this dying man is a Christian. The one good hope which sustains him when sinking in the deep waters of death is so rich and full and strong that he can feel the need of nothing else. With gentle words he soothes the grief of those who weep around him. With calm assurance he tells them that he finds no sting, no terror in death. Slowly, gently he passes away, and when he is gone it seems as if he had only taken the hand of messengers that had come to conduct him to the throne of the King. He who so passes in triumph through the gate of death into endless life is the greatest of conquerors, and the hope that sustains him and gives him the victory in the last conflict is the richest possession.

I have stood on the deck of the mighty steamship in mid-ocean, when the winds were loud and the waves were high, and every inch of progress must be made in the teeth of the storm. Every time the vast structure rose upon the ridge of the billow it seemed as if it would certainly be broken by the strain upon the timbers. Every time it went down into the valleys of the sea it seemed as if it would go to the bottom. Sometimes it would stand motionless and paralyzed by the stunning blow of some mighty wave. And then it would rush into the midst of the rolling mountains of water, with every timber trembling through its whole length and the waves sweeping across the deck from stem to stern. And, so rising and falling, struggling and trembling, the mighty ship held on its way in the face of the storm, because down deep in the midst of its oak-ribbed and iron-bound frame there was a heart of fire that never ceased to beat and to burn. Harnessed in iron and bound to the wheel, there was a mysterious power which neither winds nor waves could tire or exhaust. And I could stand on the deck and see that strong ship wrestling with the tempest, knowing that my own life was staked upon its success, and having no fear that it would fail to fight its way through and reach the desired haven.

And so have I seen a man, as frail and fallible as myself, beset by many temptations, borne down by heavy burdens, feeling every day that the tasks laid upon him were greater than his strength, and yet

meeting them manfully, wrestling with many difficulties and fighting with many foes. And I have felt sure that that man would fight the good fight to the glorious end and receive the victor's crown at last, because down deep in the very soul and centre of his being there had been kindled a fire from Heaven's own altar; there was burning the flame of an immortal hope, and no billows could quench that flame, no storm could blow it out. The strong steamship was less sovereign on the seas than was that tried and tempted man over all the calamities of earth. They were all so completely under his command that they could only help him on his way, just as the fires of persecution only build chariots of flame in which the triumphant souls of martyrs ascend to their heavenly thrones.

And this grand success in winning the richest prize, gaining the greatest victory, does not depend upon possessing what the world would call great talents and extraordinary opportunities. To every man his own mind is a kingdom, and he should suffer no rival on its throne. If he masters his own spirit, if he rules well in the living and immortal realm of his own soul, he is a prince in his own God-given right—he is a king among men. Any man can be great and honorable who is content to do his best thing, and leave all other things alone. Men fail to master themselves, and so make a failure of life, because they want decision to choose their own course and pursue it to the end. Men of feeble talents and few opportunities become great

before God and man by just doing the work which the Master gives them to do.

The little city of Freyburg in Switzerland has the largest organ in the world. When in full play it pours forth a tempest of sound through a forest of pipes, seven thousand and eight hundred in number, shaking the walls and the foundation of the old St. Nicholas Church in which it stands. All the musical bands in Boston, New York and Philadelphia combined would not make an orchestra equal in power to this mighty instrument alone. And it is all the work of one man, named Aloys Moser. He was poor; he was not thought to be a master in his art; he never received any adequate reward for his labor. Without assistance or suggestion from others, he formed the design of building for his native city an organ which travelers from distant nations should turn aside from their journeys to hear, and which, when heard in the darkness of the cathedral at night, as it now is, should make an hour never to be forgotten. And so poor Moser began his life's work, and he persevered for long years in the face of opposition and poverty and ridicule, until his task and his life were finished together. His aim may not have been the highest nor his motive the best. But he persevered with the faith of a martyr till his work was done, and now it stands among all similar works in the world like Mont Blanc among the mountains of his native land, peerless and alone.

When skillful fingers touch the keys the mighty instrument responds with myriad voices, ranging through infinite variations in sweetness and compass and power. Now it pours forth the heart-breaking notes of the Miserere, with a voice so piteous and human that it would seem as if a lost soul were imprisoned and wailing in its wilderness of pipes. And now it rolls up the jubilant thunders of the Hallelujah Chorus in such mighty volumes that the entranced listener forgets the earthly temple and the work of human hands, and imagines himself surrounded by the trumpets and voices of heaven in numbers without number. Now it sounds the war-note, wild and high, mingled with the tramp of hosts and the battle-hymn of men that march as they sing. And now it warbles Sweet Home, with a silvery accompaniment of singing birds and murmuring brooks and rustling foliage around the cottage door. Now it chants the unearthly strain of cloistered monks, inwoven with echoes that creep along corridors of stone and climb the sepulchral arches of the cathedral's long-drawn aisle. Then it sings the evening hymn of shepherds on the mountains, while the hills are glad with the tinkling bells of the home-returning flocks, and the vesper chimes are ringing in the village church below. And then again it bursts forth with such a tempest of sound as shakes the hills when storms are abroad among the Alps and thunders leap from cloud to cloud.

And all this mighty flood, this deep resounding sea

of instrumental harmony, came forth from the hand and brain of one poor man, who made its creation the task of his life, and who withdrew all thought from everything else that he might do one thing well. And his success shows that any man can make himself a king in nobleness of aim and completeness of execution, simply by fixing it clearly in mind what he can do best, and then suffering no side influence to withdraw his attention from his chosen task. Anything best worth having is within the reach of him who has decision enough to choose it with all his heart, and self-command enough to seek it with all his might.

Let me say then, especially to any young man whose eye may fall on this page, choose for yourself a career which for time and eternity is absolutely the highest and the best. Determine to make the noblest use of every faculty and opportunity, and take the word of divine revelation for your guide in deciding what is the highest and best. Study with profound interest the One infinitely perfect character as set before you in the gospel record. Be sure to learn first of all that goodness alone gives greatness to character; truth builds up the mind and makes the perfect man; devotion to duty is the secret of happiness. Determine therefore to be a man whose mind, whose whole soul and being, are built up and buttressed against all evil and temptation by goodness, truth, duty. Scatter blessings for others as fast as you gather them for yourself. Increase the value of every possession twofold by giving

more than you receive. Never be content to sit down to your own feast of happiness alone, and congratulate yourself that you have more than others.

In all your plans, efforts and pleasures seek the highest exaltation of your spiritual and immortal being. Never stoop to anything that will bring a stain upon conscience. Never lend yourself to anything that misleads the mind or corrupts the heart. Make the record of your life such as you will not be ashamed to own when the secrets of all hearts shall be revealed and the work of every man's hand shall be weighed in the balances of truth. Accept it ever as the great work of life to make yourself the noblest creature of God in this world, and to prepare for an equal rank with the highest and the best of God's creatures in the world to come. In every condition and occupation let your conduct be such as shall do honor to the child and heir of the most high God.

Any young man who acts upon such principles will make himself a king. He may not live in a palace. He may not have thousands of his fellow-men to offer him the help of their hands and the homage of their hearts. But beings mightier than all the armies of earth, angels from the throne of heaven, will delight to wait upon him. He can afford to be indifferent to all earthly distinctions. He can rise above all the hazards, sufferings and losses of this earthly life. He can count himself a king by the crowning of a Divine Hand, and the lord of his own destiny by a graciously-

given and divine right. The world may despise him, it cannot put him to shame. The wealth of the world may never pour its golden showers into his lap. He may never have the means of surrounding himself with the comforts and embellishments of cultivated society. He may not be able to silence the clamorous cry of want in his own dwelling. He may even be as destitute as One who had not where to lay his head. He may toil as a poor laborer all his life long. He may never find the rest of the night sufficient for the weariness of the day. He may lose the fruit of his toil, and his earthly expectations may be cut off. After all his best efforts, he may only receive the pity of the compassionate and the contempt of the proud.

But he does not need the world's pity. He is not a defeated or a disappointed man. At the end of the great conflict of life he is sure to be brought off conqueror and more than conqueror. In the final day the crown of victory shall be awarded him in the presence of the assembled generations of men.

The royal cedar of Lebanon is exalted like a monarch on the throne of the mountains. It catches the first light of the sun in his rising, and it is the last to reflect his setting beams. It defies the fury of a thousand storms, and it lives on in the freshness of youth through a thousand years. The humble hyssop grows out of a narrow chink in the wall, and it dies in the first frost. And yet the difference between the two is infinitely less than the difference between the prospects

of the lowliest Christian in the world and the present glory of the greatest earthly monarch.

The least of the followers of Christ has entered into alliance with infinite power. He has been taken under the guidance of infinite wisdom. He has been received as a child by the adoption of infinite love. No envious hand can blot his name from the book of life. He can no more lose his inheritance than the years of God's eternity can be counted or the resources of God's power can be exhausted. It is not vanity or ignorance or enthusiasm which leads the disciple of Christ to glory in his privileges and prospects. He has been appointed by the choice of the Infinite Mind to possess a kingdom and to enjoy the blessedness which shall continue when the foundations of the earth are broken up and the material heavens have passed away. On his account the greatest events in the history of time were ordained. The conquest of nations, the rise of kingdoms, the casting down of thrones, are things of little importance in the destinies of the universe compared with his eternal salvation. To accomplish that the Almighty revealed himself unto patriarchs, prophets and apostles. For his instruction the record of the divine will was given by the pen of inspiration. It was for his sake that the Son of God came forth from the bosom of the Father upon the mission of mercy. For his sake the Divine Redeemer entered into conflict with the great enemy, and drank the cup of human woe down to the bitter dregs of shame and

agony and death. It is so great a thing to be redeemed by the blood of Christ, there is a dignity so exalted, an inheritance so great, a glory so far above all the pomp and pride of earth, conferred upon every child of God, that we labor in vain to describe his privileges and his prospects in the ordinary forms of speech.

The high and firm position of the cedar, as it once grew in Lebanon, well illustrates the life of the righteous man who lives above the world and holds fast his post of duty, however violent the storm that attempts to cast him down. When the mists of the morning darkened the plain and rolled in billowy torrents through the valleys, and thick rain-clouds covered the top of Carmel and brooded over the distant sea, then still the royal cedar kept its high throne upon Lebanon, rejoicing in the clear, calm light, and anticipating the coming of the cloudless noon. And when the wild storm came rushing down through all the gorges of the Syrian mountains, and the fir trees crashed and the oaks of Bashan howled beneath the sounding pinions of mighty winds, then still the royal cedar of Lebanon, strong with the growth of a thousand years, fixed the grapple of its deep and widespreading roots upon the everlasting rock and stood firm. The lonely wanderer among the mountains was safely sheltered beneath its branches, while he heard the roar of the tempest and traced the track of its desolation afar.

So stands the righteous man, secure and serene, upon

the high post of duty. The light of heaven is around him, and the peace of God pervades his soul when deep darkness settles down on all the devices of wicked men and the wild tempests of revolution shake the nations. He goes straight forward with a firm step and a fearless heart, when the low and crooked policy of the cunning and compromising only leads on to greater dangers and worse conclusions.

The light of heaven will always shine around the head of him who keeps himself at a sufficiently high and commanding position above the world. The mount of God may seem to the sensual and the murmuring multitude in the distance below to be covered with thick darkness and shaken with angry tempests. But to him who ascends the sacred heights upon the wings of faith and prayer the whole region is full of light. His countenance absorbs the radiance of the heavenly day. When he returns to the world, it can be seen in his silent look that he has been talking with God as friend with friend. The face of the good man is a mirror to receive the light of the Sun of Righteousness and reflect it upon a darkened world. By looking at him the fearful, the benighted, the wandering can always see that the true light shines, though it may be hidden from their eyes. It is the decisive test of a good man to be calm in the midst of public agitation, to be fearless in the face of danger, to be prompt in the discharge of duty, to live every day in the celestial region of light and love, above all the doubts and fears

and cavils of the world. The man who lives thus preaches righteousness by the purity of his own life; he encourages the fearful by the strength of his own faith, he cheers the sorrowing by the light and serenity of his own countenance. And when the day of peculiar trial comes to him, and temptations assail him in a fiery shower, and afflictions beat upon him like a strong wind to cast him down, then still he stands, like the royal cedar upon the high throne of Lebanon, a defence to others and secure in himself, proving that his foundation is the holy mountain and his trust is in the immutable God.

Stand, then, ye servants of God, ever firm upon the post of duty, amid the changing and passionate multitude. Shine forth with your sacred light, that wanderers in the darkness of error and unbelief may see the safe path. Stand, like the cedar of Lebanon, on the storm-swept mountain, always fresh and growing, full of life and firm in position, giving shelter to the weary traveler and guiding wanderers on the distant sea. Stand fast and quit you like men, amid all the dangers and discouragements of the time, and never bate one jot of heart or hope that the whole earth shall be adorned with a beauty surpassing the glory of Lebanon, and every waste place in the wilderness shall bear the tree of life and become as the Paradise of God.

The Fading Leaf.

We all do fade as a leaf.—Isa. lxiv. 6.

XXIV.

THE FADING LEAF.

A HUNDRED generations of men have appeared on the earth, borne their part in the stormy scenes of life, and passed away to the silent land, blooming and fading like the foliage of each successive year, since the great prophet of Israel took up the wail that had come down to him from as many generations in the past, "We all do fade as a leaf." And still our hearts, in the moments of sadness and deep thought, can find no better utterance than that in which the ancient Hebrew poured forth all the sorrows of humanity in his day. And this melancholy sentiment of the inspired bard, who woke the harp of Zion to the sweetest and loftiest strain in olden time, becomes the song of universal Nature when the glory of the summer is past, and the loitering sun rises later every morning, and, like a weary traveler, passes earlier to his evening rest.

The dying year sings its own dirge with the sweetest voice and it puts on the gayest robes when all the bright children of the sun are passing away in long procession to the tomb. The brilliant hues of autumn

flame out in the dying foliage which is now falling upon our city walks. The sweet-scented vine, which has been creeping slowly all summer along the coping above my study window to shield me kindly from the sun, is now dropping its sear leaves, one by one, and as they float down silently through the still air, the moving shadows fall upon my brow where time makes its mark; and when my fading companions of the summer are gone, it seems as if their hectic hues had photographed the divine words upon the inner chamber of the brain, "We all do fade as a leaf." The kind leaves that have blessed me all summer with their shade cannot go away to mingle with the dust of the grave without sending in a silent shadow as they pass, to remind me that I shall soon follow them to the house appointed for all the living.

And the silent sermon which the falling leaves preach to me while I try to catch its expression and pass it on to others, is repeated millions of times for all who will listen and think at this most thoughtful season of the year. Far away through the broad country the forests and the fields are arrayed in splendors like the robes of the morning, when curling mists crown the mountain and sapphire clouds build a throne for the sun. And yet all these brilliant hues are signs of decay in the green world of nature. Its dying glories burn like the spot of hectic fire on the pale cheek of the consumptive, the fair counterfeit of life which appears only to warn us that death is near.

"The parting year
Dies like the dolphin, whom each pang imbues
With a new color, as it gasps away,
The last still loveliest, till 'tis gone and all is gray."

The hidden and mysterious vitality of nature declines slowly from the high noon of its strength and fervor and passes away, with the sweet and solemn dirge of sighing winds and the melancholy murmur of falling leaves, to the cold grave of winter. The frosts of every night and the chilling blasts of each successive day send a countless funeral procession of summer's young and beautiful children to moulder back to the dust from which they so lately sprung. The providential lessons of the season are impressed upon our minds by as many preachers as there are fading leaves in our daily walks. The appeal to our hearts is adorned with the strange fascination of dying beauty and one must be very hard and insensible not to feel its power. It wails forth in all the moaning and melancholy voices which chant the hymn of death to the dying year. And the word of divine inspiration, speaking in the name of Him who makes summer and winter, commands us to observe and heed the lesson which God's finger writes upon the fading leaves. We shall find that the two voices of our Father speak in unison with each other, whether we turn to the written page and read, or only look in silent contemplation upon the solemn procession of the seasons as it passes by in the pomp of the waning year.

Let us listen with devout heart and attentive mind to the sermon of the season upon the frail and transitory state of man in this world. Over this the prophet poured his inspired lamentation in ancient time. And in every age and in every land it has been a subject for every preacher and a sign for every heart: We all do fade as a leaf. The generations of men appear and pass away like the foliage of each successive year. We may bask a little longer in the bright sunshine, we may have a little more strength to buffet the storm. But our bodies are just as certain to moulder down to the dust as the leaves which we see falling through the silent air when the winds are hushed and all nature sleeps in the autumn light. We tread them beneath our feet, just as future generations will walk over our dust without knowing that we once lived. Millions of human lives are shorter than the life of the leaves. Multitudes wear upon their countenances through summer and winter the hectic and sickly hues which the leaves put on when they are about to die. We are apt to be surprised and alarmed when we see the signs of the coming change upon faces where we have seen the glow of health. And yet the lesson of human frailty has been taught us by voices as numerous as the falling leaves. Every year God clothes the forests and the fields in all the splendors of exuberant life, and then lays their glorious beauty in the dust. And everything that lives and dies in the whole kingdom of nature is appointed to teach us that we too must die. Every

blade of grass that fades in the broad fields of the open country, every withered leaf that strews the forest walks, every naked branch in the streets and squares of the busy city, every return of the autumn's melancholy days, every change through which we are swept on in the varied course of the growing and dying year repeats to man the sentence pronounced at the gate of the forfeited Paradise: "Dust thou art and unto dust thou shalt return." It was said and sung three thousand years ago, and it is as true now as it was when Isaiah prophesied in Judea and the "monarch minstrel" swept the harp of Zion: "Man cometh forth as a flower and is cut down."

A wise man, in making plans for the future, will always accept as a condition limiting and overruling all others the fact that life is rapidly passing away, and it may come to a close at any moment. When we busy ourselves most in providing ease and comfort for many years, a solemn voice whispers the warning, "This night thy soul may be required of thee." We are all like soldiers waiting orders. Whatever engagements we may make for work or pleasure in this world, they are all liable to be overruled and canceled at any moment by the word of the great Commander. When he calls we must leave everything and go. His summons may come when we least expect it, and we must not be so busy with earthly things as to make it hard to break off all our engagements and go to return no more. We are strangers and sojourners on

the earth, as were all our fathers, and every day's march in the journey of life brings the awful shadow of eternity nearer. The farther we go the more interest we have in the solemn question, What lies beyond, in "that undiscovered country from whose bourne no traveler returns"? Surely it is not unbecoming in me to ask often and with earnestness, What lies hidden in the dread mystery of death? what condition shall be mine in the infinite realm of the Hereafter? Every year of life it seems as if time were hurling me on with a swifter wing. The ridge of the mountain is already past, and while the ascent on the morning side was slow, the shadows of evening come up to meet me as I go down, and shorten the day. Many who started with me in the journey have fallen out of the ranks, and all of us who still live are moving on, as soldiers move in the charge upon the battery of death, parting with comrades at every step. Every feeling of weakness or of weariness which comes over us in the way, every new pain that makes itself felt in any part of our frame, every new furrow that passing time ploughs upon our faces, every fading and falling hair upon our heads, takes up the lamentation of the prophet, and says, in sympathy with the dying year, "We all do fade as a leaf."

And all these signs are sent not to make our earthly life a melancholy and funeral march to the tomb, but to create within us longings and preparations for our great immortality. Divine Providence, by the whole

course of Nature, and the divine word from the first to the last page would teach us not to expend our greatest efforts and fix our fondest expectations upon possessions that glide from our grasp and fade from our vision like the vapors of the morning. And the sacred lesson is taught in such a variety of forms, it is repeated so many times, that we may not be taken by surprise and filled with despair when the killing frost of disappointment and death withers the fresh blossoms and blasts the unripe fruit of our earthly joys.

The one event which of all others is most certain and most momentous in its consequences is surely the one for which we should be most fully and constantly prepared. The servant who is awake and watching for the return of his Master is glad to hear the sound of his step on the threshold and to welcome his coming. It is only the careless and the disobedient who are filled with terror at the sound of the Master's voice. When he sends the word of warning and of promise, saying, Surely I come quickly, the hearts of his waiting servants reply, Even so come, Lord Jesus. There is no fanaticism, no morbid weariness of life, in holding ourselves ready to welcome the speedy coming of the Master. If we take this life for what it is worth, if we use all its opportunities in preparing for another and a better life to come, we shall rejoice to know that the battle is fought and the victory won. We have lived long enough when we have lived to gain life's great end. We have had enough of the possessions of

earth when we have made them the means of securing for ourselves everlasting habitations. We have had enough of the pleasures of earth when we have learned to long for endless joys at God's right hand. We have had enough of the sorrows and afflictions of earth when our chastened and weary souls are ready to enter into rest. When we have just learned to live well in this world, then is the good time to die, for the true and the blessed living is all to come for ever hereafter.

Thus the intimations of coming death have no terror for those who live only to prepare for another and a better life. To such the fading of the leaf, the rapid succession of the seasons, the decay of these mortal bodies, the transitory nature of all earthly things, are welcome signs that their redemption draweth nigh. If we go submissive to our Father's will, the afflictions that multiply and the burdens that grow heavier by the way are only milestones upon the heavenward journey, to remind us that we are drawing nearer home and that soon we shall rest in our Father's house.

"A few more storms shall beat
On this wild, rocky shore;
And we shall be where tempests cease,
And surges swell no more.
A few more struggles here,
A few more partings o'er,
A few more toils, a few more tears,
And we shall weep no more."

None will deny that the fading of the leaf favors

serious and thoughtful frame of miud. There is something of sadness in the season which steals over our spirits, and makes it easier for us to contemplate the great realities of the unseen world. It is not mere fancy or sentimentalism for us to say that the autumn winds murmur with a melancholy strain. The leafless branches of the forest moan as if bewailing the lost glories of summer. To the pensive mind there are many appearances that speak of decay and death. There are many sounds that seem like voices from another world. Among the deepest impressions which I received from Nature in early life I remember the moaning sound of the wind in the autumn woods. It haunts me evermore in the city and on the sea and in far-distant lands, and it seems like a voice that recreates the golden visions of youth and calls up the shadowy forms in the world of dreams, and blends all sounds into sweet and soul-subduing harmonies.

And this softened and melancholy season is interposed between the luxuriance of summer and the dead waste of winter to give us time to think how soon the glory of earth passes away, how soon the winter of death comes on, and how necessary it is for us to fix our hopes upon a resurrection and a new life beyond the grave. And we need time for such reflection. Our life in this world is not all given us for action in the stirring fields of enterprise, and then for useless rest in the imbecility of exhausted powers. Between high hope and complete despair there is a space for

calm and serious thought. It is not the highest happiness to make life all one holiday of cheerful and delighted emotion. It is not all an affliction to have the mind drawn to solemn and subduing meditation upon the great realities of our spiritual being. Whoever thinks at all will find many sad things to think of. Whoever makes the best use of his eyes will see many sad sights in the world around him. And the hours which most enrich and satisfy the soul are not the hours of gayety or of gloom, but of deep and earnest thought. It may bring a shade of deep seriousness upon the brow to think reverently of God and of the ever-impending destiny of eternity. But there is more joy in that solemnity than in "the loud laugh which speaks the vacant mind." When we are suitably in earnest about the great realities of our being and destiny, we shall care very little about what thoughtless people call pleasure.

Every thinking man should wish to know all he can about the Being that made him; about the dark and dreadful power which makes it hard to think of God and ourselves as we ought; about the shining way which leads to a better home, and which is open for every man to tread; about the sore and wearisome conflict which must be maintained by all who would win the crown of life; about the glorious destiny that is opened for us in the endless future. These are things that equally concern us all, and we should be thankful for any voice, any influence, any season, that

helps us to think about them. If we take these things to heart, and act in view of the infinite interests which they set before us, happiness will be the consequence without our seeking for it. And it is very unwise and very unsafe for any man to shut his eyes and stop his ears and go stumbling on till he falls into his own grave, all the while confessing that there are some things of infinite moment to himself of which he cannot bear to think, and which he would rather others would not name to him.

The botanist gets a great name by studying the form and life of leaves that live but a year. But in the whole immensity of the material creation there is nothing so great, so awful, so incomprehensible as the human soul. If you would be lost in the contemplation of infinite mystery, you have only to shut your eyes and think of yourself. In the study of your own spiritual being, in the endeavor to grasp the grand conditions of your own duty and destiny for ever, you have something to think of that will task all your powers and supply you with more thrilling personal interest than all the great events of this earthly life. The secret history of one human soul, could it all be written out and emblazoned before the sun, would be more thrilling than the life of Cæsar or Napoleon. The great masters of fiction excite the wonder and applause of millions by only revealing a little of what lies hidden in every human heart. And the bare fact that the awful tragedy of existence is in perpetual

representation within our own souls, and is hurrying swiftly on to the last determinative act, should make us serious and thoughtful as we pursue the journey of life.

The fall of the leaf should teach us so to live that the beauty and excellence of our lives shall shine forth with peculiar brightness when we come to die. The forests put on their most glorious beauty when the leaves begin to fall. Traveling at this season in our Northern States, under the sacred and dreamy spell of the October days, I have often seemed to myself to be ranging on through some vast gallery of art, where mountains rise on either hand to supply walls on which to hang the ever-unrolling canvas, and stretching away mile after mile and league after league, through winding valleys and over lofty ridges, extends the interminable panorama; and every successive scene displays new riches of infinitely diversified and dazzling beauty, such as no artist's hand could imitate, no tasteful eye could weary in beholding. The "gorgeous East" never clothed its kings in robes of such surpassing splendor as the wild forests of the North put on when the autumn winds begin to strew the foliage of summer upon the grave of the dying year. I am told that an English gentleman paid an American artist twenty-five thousand dollars for a few square feet of painted canvas, on which he had delineated a feeble and puny imitation of the autumn woods and wild mountains of this Western World. The Divine Artist

exhibits the original, in all its magnificence of extent and perfection of beauty every year, to everybody, for nothing. It seems as if the gates of heaven had been opened and all the splendors of the Golden City had been showered upon our autumn woods, and then, after a brief exhibition, the vision of beauty had been received up again into heaven, that it might draw our hearts to that bright land where beauty never fades and the living never die.

And if God adorns the decay of nature with such ineffable splendor, much more may we, standing at the head of this lower creation, aspire to make the close of our earthly life glorious and beautiful exceedingly. This aspiration has been often realized in the dying experience of those who had clothed themselves in robes of righteousness and walked humbly with God. The prophet of old, after a life of toil and conflict, was carried to heaven in a chariot of fire. The face of the first martyr shone with such exceeding brightness that even his adversaries saw it as it had been the face of an angel. When the frail and suffering body is wasting away with disease, the soul that rests upon Jesus sometimes seems to become transfigured by faith and to shine forth with a heavenly light. The departing believer speaks as if he had learned the language of heaven from the guardian spirits that keep watch around his dying bed. Many a parent's heart has been comforted in the loss of a little child by the remembrance of the voice that died away in song, and

the unearthly light that shone upon the face where death had set its seal. Many times have I seen the servant of God chastened in spirit and beautified with the expression of heavenly peace in his countenance, and passing away as the year goes to its grave with all the glories of autumn in its train.

There is no endowment of genius, no lofty and impassioned utterance of human speech, which will make the close of life so beautiful, so glorious as it will seem to you when you stand by the bedside of your dying friend and see him bear all his sufferings without a murmuring word, surrender all earthly attachments without regret, calmly, trustingly commend himself to the redeeming mercy, and so fall asleep in Jesus. The Christian family, whose members are thus going, one by one, in peace and triumph, from the earthly house to the house of many mansions on high, feel that heaven and earth are but a little way apart, and that they have friends and familiar acquaintances in both. And every time the close of a human life in this world is adorned with the beauty of peace and the glory of faith, death is disarmed of its sting, the victory is won from the grave, the blessed life is brought so near that the living own its worth and feel its power.

We are all moving on in the same great procession to that unseen land from which none return. And it is not necessary for us to go like unwilling captives, bound to the chariot-wheel of all-conquering death. There is no occasion for us to lift up our voices in wail-

ing and terror when the messenger comes to call us away. If we trust in Christ, who giveth us the victory, our departure will be a triumphal march and the close of life will be a coronation. Oh who would not wish to have the last stages of his earthly journey adorned with the surpassing grace and glory of Christian hope? Who would not choose to pass away in light and joy as the leaves put on their loveliest hues when about to die—as the morning star melts into the superior glory of the coming sun—as the rosy dawn brightens into the full day? Who would not wish in dying to take away the terror of death from the living, and to leave others to say, "Let my last end be like his?"

All this every one can do. The most glorious victory—the victory over death—is not one which great conquerors and mighty captains alone can gain. The hand of a little child can strike the crown from the head of the king of terrors. The gifts of the divine love which will fill our hearts with peace and clothe our countenances with light in the final hour are freely offered to all. If we live unto God, we shall find it easy to die unto him. A peaceful and happy death is the natural close of a life well spent. If we walk with Christ and delight ourselves with his company while the pleasures and temptations of the world are around us, he will not forsake us when the world has lost its charm. He will clothe us in the robes of his own divine and perfect righteousness, and we shall find ourselves at home among the princes of heaven.

Every time the year rolls round and clothes the forests and the fields in the hectic hues of autumn, we are warned and entreated by ten thousand voices to be in readiness for a peaceful and triumphant departure out of the world. The transient beauty of the fading leaves, the melancholy voices of the moaning winds, the many monitions of our frail and mortal state, all urge us to put on immortal beauty, to lay up imperishable treasures, to make sure of eternal life. The leaves fall when they have done their work, and the branches are left free for the growth of another year. The faded foliage of autumn will be replaced by the bloom and luxuriance of returning spring. The decay of the passing year will support the life of a more abundant vegetation in the next. So, if we live to do God's will, he will take from us the fading beauty and the transient joys of earth only to confer upon us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory. He will not remove a single earthly blessing too soon. He will not suffer any of our present treasures, opportunities or enjoyments to be lost, if only we use them in making our souls pure and beautiful in his sight. The good man cannot die too soon—he cannot live too long; for the measure of his days is with One who makes no mistakes in counting. He cannot want for time to do his work and do it well.

The Garden of God.

The Lord God planted a garden eastward in Eden, and the Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden, to dress it and to keep it.—GEN. ii. 8, 15.

XXV.

THE GARDEN OF GOD.

AMONG all nations and in all times there have been beautiful legends and blessed memories of a glory that once shone on the earth with the fullness of heavenly light. It has ever been supposed that all things were fair and lovely in the fresh morning of the world, and every voice sang for joy when the heir of earth entered upon his great inheritance. The all-creating Father took the hand of his earthly child and walked with him, "teaching him to go," in the brightness of the broad noon and in the coolness of the forest shade. The sun shone upon genial landscapes and gentle homes, and the silent stars looked down upon sleeping innocence and secure repose.

Between heaven and earth the flow of thought and sympathy was free as the flight of angels and constant as the succession of day and night. The homes of men were not yet haunted by the shadowy forms of fear. The thorns of regret had not yet grown in the path of pleasure. Sin had not mingled the poison of death in the full cup of life. The inner chambers of

the soul were all open to heaven's light. The sun of peace and gladness was never hidden by the cloud of care and pain and sorrow. Man talked with God in open vision, as friend with friend, and he lived in daily companionship with the blessed. The poets of every land have sung their sweetest, saddest strains when lamenting the lost glory of that happy age, and the toiling millions of mankind have mourned over their hard lot, as the caged bird mourns in remembrance of the wild woods and the slave groans under the burden of inherited bondage.

These faint beams of a glory that has past away from the earth are found among the traditions of all nations; they can be traced back to the earliest periods of human history. Though darkened with many errors and superstitions, they point to a common origin, and they spring from the actual and inspired history of man's first days on the earth. That better state, so brief in duration, so far away in the past, is fully described by the meaning of the one word—"Eden"—a garden of delight, a Paradise of loveliness and purity. By common consent the name stands for riches without want, health without sickness, pleasure without pain, joy without sorrow, life without death. Wherever men can now find a region having most of what all desire and least of what all dread, they call it Eden.

In such a home, surrounded with beauty and loaded with blessing, man woke to conscious being when the Lord God breathed into his nostrils the breath of life,

and he became a living soul. The first father of our race knew nothing of the helplessness of infancy. He started upon the career of immortality in the strength and fullness of perfect manhood. In the first moment of self-scrutiny he found himself everything that he would desire to be, with no feeling or suspicion that anything had been omitted or overdone in the selection and finish of his faculties. As the bird could wish itself to be nothing else than what it was when bursting forth upon the wing, so the first man could find no defect in the constitution of his being. The whole creation around him was pronounced very good by Him whose standard is infinite perfection, and man was the last and best work of all.

The flowers that bloomed on the banks of the fourfold river of Paradise, the forests that clothed the hills and climbed the distant mountain sides, the singing birds that lifted the sweet incense of song highest into the dome of heaven, the splendors that poured from the open gates of the morning, and the golden hues that robed the setting day, were all what God made them to be in beauty and in use the first day of their existence, and man himself was the crowning glory of the whole, the consummation of all completeness, the last and grandest achievement of infinite wisdom and infinite power in the work of creation.

The first rose that bloomed in Eden was mature and perfect on the day of its appearance. The grape was already hanging on the vine, and the fig was formed

upon the tree; the goodly feathers adorned the ostrich, and the tawny lion "shook his brinded mane;" the mighty oak and the mountain pine rose to their loftiest height in the same day that the Lord God made them from the dust of the earth. They did not grow up at first by slow development from germs and atoms. Every race started with a full grown and perfect life. All this is implied in the simple statement of the inspired record, that the Lord God planted the garden and made it complete before delivering it into the hands of its new possessor. It was fitting that the Creative Power, in bringing new classes of beings upon the earth, should start them in their generations at the highest perfection.

And so man began his existence on the earth at the very highest grade of human power and excellence. The utmost that the race could do in all subsequent time would be to equal the first perfect man as God made him. He was not left to roam the wilderness in search of food and to seek a shelter in the caves of the earth. The idea that the first man was a savage, and that his first home was with the brutes, is a fable of heathen poets or an invention of misnamed philosophy, having no foundation in reason or revelation. The highest attainment of modern culture is only an imperfect return to the blessed age, when the human mind was taught directly by divine inspiration, and every faculty was fresh and free to range through all the works of God.

The first home which the heavenly Father gave his earthly child was in a garden of delight—a paradise of loveliness and beauty. The Lord God selected the site and planted the garden with his own hand. Along the shaded walks and winding streams he set the fruitful trees and hung the climbing vines. He chose every shade and shape of leaf and flower to make them pleasant to the eye. He gave the form and flavor of fruit such as should satisfy both the desire for beauty and the appetite for food. Within that sacred conservatory the first man could survey the most rare and beautiful productions in the whole vegetable world, collected and ranged in order by his Divine Teacher for him to study and admire. The towering cedar crowned the distant heights, the branching banyan spread its "pillared shade high overarched" along the quiet walk; the tufted palm waved its feathery fronds in the evening wind, when the voice of the Lord God was heard walking among the trees of the garden in the cool of the day.

The wild beasts were moved by divine impulse to present themselves in peaceful homage before their human lord and receive such names as he would give. Bright birds flashed like meteors among the branches of the dim woods. The wildest were tame in the presence of man, and all came with beauty and song to receive his praise and to adorn his garden of delight. Dominion was given unto him over all the

living tribes of the earth, and he was inspired with skill to exercise that dominion so far as to make the bird and the beast obey him. The names which he gave to the multitude of living creatures indicated a knowledge of their habits and instincts more precise and significant than the dry and studied terms of modern science. The wild man of the West named the bright cascade Minnehaha, that the word might bring to mind the merry sound of "the laughing water." And so the names which were given to the winds, the clouds, the rivers, the forests, the beasts, the birds, by the inspired man in Paradise were all significant of the objects to which they were given. The most obvious and distinctive characteristic of the bird or flower was conveyed by the sound and sense of its name. If we could still speak the language of Eden, our children would learn the qualities of things from the names they bear.

God himself was the teacher of the first man, and under the instruction of Omniscience the pupil was conducted at once through the whole range of knowledge by special inspiration. The Almighty Father spoke to his earthly child with a human voice, and so man learned to speak. In the beginning of language, man received every word from the mouth of the Lord. The vocal sounds which give the names of things, the forms and inflections of words which express connected thought, were never invented by man or created by necessity They were given as truly as were the fac-

ulties of the mind and the organs of the body. No effort or want or invention of man could have created the organs of speech. Just as little could he originate language itself. It must be given by the inspiration of the Almighty or he would be speechless for ever.

And the first language spoken by man was the best, because it came fresh and living from the mouth of God. The perfection of the first speech was correspondent to the perfection of the first man. The many languages now spoken on the earth compared with the first are only as the shining fragments of a broken vase compared with the beautiful whole. The fragments are not only irregular and incomplete, but they have been scattered in the dust and soiled. Taken piece by piece and polished with ever so careful a hand, we can only guess at the primitive meaning of the part —we can never reconstruct the perfect whole.

All the philosophers in the world could not create a language, any more than they could create a man. They can only take what has been given by God, and the gift itself as now received marred with all of man's imperfections. The child learns to speak only by hearing others speak. If the whole race were struck dumb, or one generation should grow up without hearing a word spoken, language would be lost to the earth, and it could be recovered only by direct inspiration from the Almighty. All our attempts to refine and improve language are only slight approaches toward the power

and the purity with which the first man was taught to speak with his Maker in the garden of delight.

The first man had a home suited to his wants and gratifying to his taste. The first human habitation was built by Him who built the worlds. The Divine Architect, who made the delicate and beautiful frame of the human body for the soul to dwell in, would not leave his matchless work naked and houseless, to be burnt by the sun and chilled by the night, to be parched by the winds and beaten by the storms. The first pair were provided with shelter and covering suited to the genial clime and primitive state. The nakedness of which the inspired record speaks must refer to lightness and simplicity of clothing, rather than utter destitution. The first day man walked forth in his resplendent and divine beauty through Paradise he must have had covering for the body and protection for the feet, otherwise his first experience would have been pain, and he would have laid down wearied and wounded to his first night's repose. He must have had a better couch than the bare earth, and a more suitable home than a cave in the forest, else the birds would have mourned in pity for their lord, and the lot of the wild beast would have been better than his. The first perfect man, the lord of the earth, must have had a habitation suited to his royal rank, and robes of divine workmanship to adorn his kingly state, and implements of husbandry made for his use in the congenial work of dressing the garden and keeping it. It

would have been impossible for the first pair to preserve their lives in Paradise itself, had not the all-creating Father crowned his great work by giving them every instrument and every instruction needed to maintain their high estate of purity, knowledge and dominion over all the earth.

I make no account of the theories and speculations of philosophers who maintain that the civilized man of modern times arose by slow degrees from the savage state, and more remotely from the race of brutes. They are so anxious to exclude the interference of a free and sovereign will from the established system of the universe that, in doing so, they exclude themselves from the proper rank and dignity of man. They would rather confess themselves to have sprung from the lowest class of brutes than to admit that the order of the universe is due to the continued and voluntary choice of one infinite and all-wise Creator.

And yet these wise men confute themselves. For they claim that no force can be created, no new element of power can be added to that which has come from the Unknown, and which governs the world. They tell us that the grand machine of the universe, having been once mysteriously wound up, is all the while running down. The stream of human history cannot rise higher than the fountain-head. And therefore, by their own showing, the human race must have started upon a higher plane of power and intelligence than has ever been reached in the subsequent ages of toil

and darkness and decline. And this is the teaching of divine revelation.

The first man that was made to have dominion over all of God's works in this world was first of the race in the excellency of power, intelligence and likeness unto his Maker. The progress of all modern times, guided by the supernatural light and grace of Christianity, has only been a struggle to recover the lost power and intelligence that were given to the first man in Paradise. All our schools and colleges, all our science and culture, all our arts and inventions, are worth less to us in our time than were the instructions of the Divine Teacher to the first man in the garden of delight.

The brute tribes came to him in willing subjection; we can only imperfectly tame and subdue them by long and patient discipline. The mysterious powers of nature unfolded their secret properties for his pleasure and advantage; we subject every substance to the fire of the furnace and the shock of the battery; we toil all day and outwatch the stars by night, and we can learn only a little about the great forces that are at work all around us. The Lord God planted his garden home, and gathered around him in perfect harmony of arrangement all trees and flowers that were most excellent in beauty and profitable for use; we plough the field and dig the garden in the sweat of our brow, and all successful culture must be a constant struggle against the growth of the bad and the decay of the

good in the kingdom of Nature. Every word in the primitive language which the first man learned from his Maker was the choicest symbol of the thing described or the thought expressed. We can seldom tell the origin of the simplest word, or give any reason why it should have one signification rather than another. The first implements which he employed in his garden work were made by the Divine Hand, and the voice of the Lord God went with him to teach him how to use them. He learned the properties of plants and the culture of the soil—not, as we must, by long and costly experiments, but by open converse with Him who made everything grow out of the ground. Whatever he needed to know, whatever question his pure heart prompted him to ask, there was a Divine Teacher by his side to solve every doubt and to communicate more than he sought. And besides, every organ of his frame was sound and strong, every faculty of his mind was fresh and free, every sensibility of his soul was quick with life.

And so lived the great first father of mankind in his garden home while the happy days of innocence lasted, and the holy heavens looked down upon a new world of purity and love. To the first created man was given a companion correspondent to him in nature and his counterpart in affection. Hand in hand the blessed pair walked through the green fields and shaded aisles of Eden, conversing in language which both had learned from the mouth of God, as angels walk by the

River of Life in the Paradise above. Birds of the sweetest song joined with them in their morning hymn of praise. Flowers of the sweetest perfume shed incense on their path. Celestial harmonies murmured in the air. Guardian spirits kept their repose by night. The Son of God appeared in form like their own, and poured into their attentive ear, fast as they could receive it, the knowledge of all things in heaven and earth.

Such was man's first home in the garden of delight; such the freedom and high command which he enjoyed in the paradisiacal state. Alas! for him that he should ever lose that blest abode! Alas! for us that the lost Paradise should be so hard to regain! And yet it is not so much change of place that we need as change of heart. If Eden still remained, with all its primitive beauty, and the flaming sword of the cherubim were lifted from the guarded gate that we might enter and reclaim the lost possession, it would not be to us a garden of delight unless the innocence of the first man were ours. Long and dark as have been the ages of sin and sorrow since Adam fell, the pure in heart can still see God. If we should wander the earth over, and sound the deep and question the stars in search of the joys of Eden, we should find them only in the Paradise of the pure heart. Long as have been the woes of exile from the garden of delight which God planted for man's first home, deep and dark as have been the shadows which have fallen upon every path

trodden by human feet, the Holy One still dwells with the humble and contrite—guardian angels still keep the home of those who walk with God.

The whole purpose of divine revelation is to open a way for the wandering to come back, to convince the doubting, the fearful and the despondent that their injured Father desires their return. The whole book of God, from beginning to end, is a continual cry unto the children of men, "Return unto me and I will return unto you." And God orders the whole course of his all-teaching and eternal Providence to confirm the voice of a Father's yearning and pleading love which cries through his word. It is impossible for the wanderer to go beyond the reach of those bonds of love with which the Holy and the Blessed One is ever drawing the disinherited child of earth back to his lost inheritance.

The cherubim whose fiery sword guarded the gate of the forfeited Eden, forbidding all return, spread out their covering wings over the mercy-seat in the tabernacle of Moses and in the temple of Zion. They were represented as bending forward with reverent and adoring study to learn what might be signified by the divine symbol of a propitiatory sacrifice for sin. Thus God taught his ancient people the great mystery which angels desired to look into—the mystery of pardon through the blood of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world—the mystery of Paradise regained by the cross of Christ. When the weary exile of

earth returns from all his wanderings and stands in penitence at the guarded gate, pleading only the cross of Christ for admission, "the watching cherub hears and drops his double-flaming sword." The way of entrance is open and free. Angel hosts come forth to welcome him to bliss. Crowned and proclaimed as the ransomed of the Lord, he finds a brighter home and a better life than Adam lost in Eden.

Man Wonderfully Made.

I will praise thee: for I am fearfully and wonderfully made.—Ps. cxxxix. 14.

XXVI.

MAN WONDERFULLY MADE.

THE old philosophers used to say that on earth there is nothing great but man. It would have been truer if they had said that on earth are many great things, but man is the greatest of all. All of God's works are great and marvelous. The more we study them, the more wonderful they seem in completeness and in adaptation to the ends of their creation. But inasmuch as the purpose for which man was created is the greatest, man himself must be the most wonderful of all God's works in this world.

The student may spend a lifetime in studying the nature of plants, and he may make himself familiar with all trees and flowers—from the mighty pine whose life extends through thousands of years to the pale primrose that dies in bringing tidings of the coming spring. And yet in the first leaf that he sees waving in the wind, in the simplest blade of grass that he treads beneath his foot, he will find much that he cannot understand. He will be compelled to acknowledge that life in its lowest form is a mystery past finding

out. The chemist may collect and analyze the minerals and earths and liquids and gases until he has examined and named every substance and defined and tested every force which he can find in the whole kingdom of Nature. And yet he cannot tell us the form or size or color or weight of a single atom. He cannot tell what holds atoms together to make solid bodies. He cannot tell whether there be ultimate atoms of matter or not. God's work is equally past finding out in the grain of sand, in the precious gem, in the drop of water, in the electric spark and in the beam of light.

You would show me the simplest form of matter—one in which there can be no complexity and nothing hard to comprehend. In doing so you point to the smallest particle of dust that the passing wind has dropped upon your hand. We examine it with the microscope, and behold it proves to be the complete skeleton of a creature that once lived and possessed all the organs and faculties requisite to the full enjoyment of life. You turn to the heavens and point out a thin, floating mist—so thin that it takes the best eye to see it at all—and there you say that matter must be in its simplest and most elementary state. But we bring the mighty telescope to bear upon that mist, and behold it flashes into a universe of suns, any one of which may be a million times larger than the earth we tread upon.

The astronomer may spend the nights of years in

exploring the fields of space, counting the number and tracing the pathways of worlds; he may call to his aid the mightiest instruments and the most exhausting calculus; and yet the more he sees of God's glory in the heavens the more will he be inclined to exclaim, How unfathomable are the ways of the Most High! How impossible for man or any other creature by searching to find the end or the beginning of the works of God! The naturalist may study the forms and habits of birds and fish and insects and animals until he seems to be at home in all the kingdoms of Nature, and the lower orders of creation become his friends and companions. And yet he cannot tell what guides the bird in its long migration, what teaches the bee to build its waxen cell or the spider to spin its geometric web. At every step in his studies he is charmed with increasing knowledge, but he is still more fascinated with unfathomable mystery.

These wonders and mysteries attend us everywhere while studying the works of God in the creation around us. But we find the most fearful and wonderful work of all in ourselves. The body in which the soul dwells is the climax of all the beauty, completeness and adaptation which are aimed at and approached by slow degrees through the lower grades of the animal creation. God has not given us the strength of the lion, the horse or the elephant, but he has endowed us with intelligence so to apply our strength that we can easily use for ourselves and sur-

pass the power of all other creatures in the world. God has not given us the swiftness of the eagle, nor has he clothed us with the delicate and dazzling plumage of the bird of Paradise, but he has given us the command of forces that can transport us where the birds of the air never fly; he has given to the human form a grace of movement, and to the human face a beauty of expression and a dignity of command, far more impressive than brilliant robes or flashing gems. The beautiful things of earth display their greatest power when associated with a living soul. God has not clothed us with the defensive covering, or endowed us with the tenacity of life, which belong to some of the brute creation; but he has enabled us to defend ourselves against all dangers and to live and enjoy life in all the seasons and climates of the earth.

And when we consider that mind, immortal mind, dwells in this fearful and wonderful frame, when we consider that a spiritual and deathless soul lives in this frail habitation of the dust, then we are filled with awe at the thought of ourselves. We exclaim with more wonder and more meaning than the great dramatist put into the words of his most thoughtful character: "What a piece of work is man! How noble in reason! How infinite in faculties! In form and moving how express and admirable! In action how like an angel! In apprehension how like a god!"

There are many things wonderful in the organic structure of our bodies, in the combined resources of

our physical and intellectual power, and in the momentary maintenance of our life. The organ, which in itself is wonderful, becomes infinitely more so when it is made the instrument of the soul. If I use my hand or arm or any part of my frame for any considerable time, it becomes weary, and it must be revived by rest. If I try only to hold my arm in the same position the muscles soon relax, and it drops as if lifeless to my side. And yet in the very centre of this house of the soul is the heart itself, only a delicate and sensitive muscle, toiling in just the same way, beating just the same stroke against the walls of its prison, wrenched with the same spasm four thousand times an hour, night and day, from one end of the year to the other, without a moment's cessation. Whether we sleep or wake, sit or stand, walk or run, toil or rest, the tireless heart toils on, keeping the current of life in motion without any thought, attention or will of ours. And if for one minute it should become, like the hand or arm, weary and demand rest, it would never beat again, and the imprisoned soul would flee from the tabernacle of the body never to return. Watches must be wound up or they will not run. Engines must be supplied with fuel or they cease to work. All machines must be watched and their moving power constantly renewed, or they become useless. We give no attention to the beating of our hearts. The force that moves that small living engine is as independent of our will as the force that moves the sun in the heavens. And yet in

each of our bosoms that unwearied worker keeps counting the seconds, one, two, three, stroke by stroke, and it must count thirty millions of strokes for every person that lives from the beginning to the close of a year; and the moment it stops counting we are in eternity. This tireless timekeeper, which every one carries in his bosom, is all that preserves our connection with the months and years of time. When it stops, time to us shall be no more.

Is it not a very wonderful thing that so frail and sensitive an organ as the heart can work so long without resting? Is it not a very fearful thing that we should have no choice, no will or command over the heart, and yet the continued counting of strokes by that unwearied worker in our bosoms is all that stands between us and the tremendous destinies of death and eternity? Suppose a pendulum, swinging in your bedchamber, kept in motion by no visible hand or machinery, moving sometimes faster, sometimes slower, yet always going, and you lie down upon your bed, knowing that if it should stop for a moment, while you sleep or when you wake, you will be in eternity,—would you not look upon that pendulum with fearfulness and awe? You go forth to your daily task leaving it swinging there, and it must keep swinging or you will never come back alive. Would you not think many times in the day of the mysterious power that holds your life without asking your leave?

I lift my hand, direct my eye, use my voice, govern the

movement of my whole body as I choose. But in order that I may do so another Power, independent of my will, without any advice, care, or command of mine, must keep my heart beating. And so that unseen Power must redeem my life from destruction every moment, at every pulse, or I cease to live. Is it not a fearful thing to be at all times so completely in the hands of the living God? Is it not a very fearful thing for us to use any of the powers of life in displeasing God, when it is only his constant care over us that keeps us from destruction?

The tongue is another organ of the human frame very wonderful both in its structure and its use. It is the organ of speech, and the word is often used for speech itself, as well as for the whole muscular apparatus that comes into play in producing articulate sounds. So understood, it is in many respects the most wonderful organ in the human frame, not excepting even the eye. It is the most complex in structure, the most delicate in sensibility, the most marvelous in power, the most various in adaptation, the most complete embodiment and revelation of the indwelling mind.

It is by change of position in the organs of speech that the variations of vocal sounds are produced. And the combinations of motion and position of which the tongue is capable are as countless as the varieties of tones and voices among men. There are more than a thousand millions of human voices in the world, and no two are so much alike as to be taken the one for the

other. If all the inhabitants of the earth save one were ranged in a line and made to pass by that one, he could make twenty thousand different combinations of position and tone in his organs of speech for every one of the thousand millions, and never repeat a position or tone till all the line had passed him. That is to say, the organs of speech can make twenty thousand times a thousand millions of variations in tone and expression.

Two flutes, two violins, two trumpets can easily be made to sound precisely alike. Birds of the same species have so nearly the same note that we seldom observe any difference between one and another. And yet if all the human beings that have ever lived from the creation to the present hour were gathered in one assembly, every individual would be distinguishable from the rest by his voice. And the power of this faculty of speech is even more various and wonderful than the living organism by which it is brought into play. The inspired Psalmist calls it his glory, and the Apostle James says the tongue is a world in itself. It can assume all characters, express all passions and control all hearts. It can allure with the sweet accents of love, and it can terrify with the thunders of wrath. It can soothe the timid babe to sleep, and it can strike the brave and boastful man with awe. It can rouse millions to meet all that is most terrible in war and in death, and it can speak peace to the turbulent passions of the multitude, and they shall be still.

It has been said of Martin Luther that his words were half battles. And words from other lips than Luther's have won greater victories than war. They have made monarchs tremble in their capitals and conquerors turn pale at the head of armies. They have cast down thrones and shaken the whole fabric of human society as the earthquake shakes the hills and the mountain torrent sweeps away the shepherd and his flock. One strong, decisive word spoken in the crisis of great events is a new force thrown out upon the world as the dazzling lightning leaps from the dark cloud. In the last French Revolution two words, spoken by a spectator in the gallery of the National Assembly, banished the king and enthroned a new monarch over thirty-five millions of people.

A right word strikes a chord which thrills in unison with all the harps of heaven and all the hosts of God. Truth sits enthroned upon the tongue which speaks right words, and through the portals of the lips it sends forth messengers of light and blessing through all the earth and through all time. Truth must be made incarnate by the utterance of the tongue before it can go forth and shake the nations. It must be embodied in spoken words, and then it can walk through the earth with the step of power, and fly over seas and continents with the wing of eagles, and speak with authority in all hearts and homes, in all the councils and congregations of men.

There are words of power now living and reigning

on the earth, and the lips that first gave them utterance and sent them forth upon the career of conquest have been for a thousand years silent in the grave. There are words of light scattering the dark clouds that hover around the paths of men, and the breath that kindled the flame went out in far-distant lands and in times of which there is no history. There are words of kindness going up and down the world like good angels on messages of mercy, and they were first wrung out from the sore afflictions and sorrows of those whose hearts beat in love and broke in agony. No talent is more to be desired than the power to send forth words of truth and love to travel where you cannot go, and to live in the world when you are gone, as the strong oak and lofty pine live for ages after the hand that planted them has mouldered back to the dust of the earth.

There are blessed words which have carried peace to millions of troubled hearts—words that have lifted the weight of sin and sorrow from millions of crushed and suffering souls. When first spoken they came forth from human lips, all alive and tremulous with the strong love of a human heart. And rather than lose those blessed words, the world could better afford to have fire burn down its palaces and earthquakes overthrow its monuments and the sea swallow up its navies. The wide earth would no longer have a congenial home for man if one blessed Voice should cease to cry to the weary and sorrowing, "Come unto me and I will give you rest." These divine words, coming to us by the

utterance of human lips, and warm with the throbbings of a human heart, sound over all the seas of human sorrow: they are heard, clear and loud, amid all the conflicts of human passion, and they tell us of a peace that passeth all understanding; they give us the only promise that the weary soul shall ever find rest.

The words of power which determine great destinies may come forth from very humble lips, and they may be spoken on very common occasions. Man is so wonderfully made that a slight thrill upon the sensitive chords of the human heart may vibrate through eternity. A little girl playing in a retired corner of a quiet English home overheard a careless and cruel remark dropped from the lips of a casual visitor, and those words cast a shadow upon the path of that child which never lighted up, and the melancholy refrain of that early sorrow sounds like the moan of the sea through every line of one of England's sweetest, saddest poets.

A returning soldier stops at a retired farmhouse for a night; he whiles away the evening hours by telling the story of the great battle and the long campaign. His words kindle the fire of martial ambition in the heart of a bright-eyed boy who listens in the corner. The flame burns on when he who dropped the spark has gone on his way and is seen no more. By and by the cloud of war darkens a once peaceful land; the boy has become a man, the smouldering fire in his heart has shot up into dazzling brilliancy: he is at the head of great armies, the destiny of millions is made to hang

upon his word, the condition of a mighty nation and the history of the world are overruled and determined by influences going forth from the words spoken by the weary wayfarer who begged lodgings at a country farmhouse for a night.

A returned missionary stands before a strange congregation and tells the story of his toil in preaching the gospel in a foreign tongue in a far-distant land. With deep and imploring earnestness he calls for others to enlist in the sacred cause and carry the banner of the cross through every land. An unknown youth listens from the gallery, and the words of the preacher become as a fire in his throbbing heart. He goes to his home, resumes the round of daily life just as he lived before. But those burning words are still in his heart. They are remembered in his hours of toil and recreation; they haunt him in solitude; they come to him like messengers from another world in the dreams of the night. And when years have passed on, and the missionary has gone back to his field and finished his work, and his ashes are resting beneath the shadow of the palm or beside the moaning sea, there is another voice, loud and clear and strong, fired with the ardor of young manhood, taking up and carrying on the message which he began; and all its utterance and power have come from those few words dropped into the ear of an unknown youth in a strange congregation, when the speaker knew not that any listened or regarded.

Man is so fearfully and wonderfully made that a tone, a look, a breath may determine the course of conduct for a lifetime and the destiny of an immortal soul for eternity. It takes only a very slight influence to make a lasting impression upon so sensitive a thing as a human heart. The little bird that walked upon the plastic clay of the river-bank uncounted ages ago, left a track which may be seen to-day in the solid stone. The delicate fern leaf which fell from its stalk before Adam walked in Eden may be traced to-day, with all its network of veins and threads, in the cloven slate and quarried coal of our mountains. So the tongue may scatter words as freely as leaves fall in autumn, or birds sport on the river bank, but all the while the words spoken are making impressions upon souls that shall outlive all time—impressions which will remain to be read when the hills have melted like wax and the earth is burned in the final flame.

The good words of truth live and give life to the world. They may be shut up in prisons, but no fetters can bind them. They may be cast into the fire, but the truth cannot be burned. They may be thrown overboard into the depths of the sea, but the truth cannot be drowned. They may be persecuted and driven into exile. But even there they will acquire new life and make the desert blossom as the rose. It would be easier to stop the current of the mighty river, or to hush the fury of the wildest storm, than stop the course or quench the life of the good

words which any earnest, truth-speaking man has sent forth into the world. If you would throw your influence into the stream which carries blessing wherever it flows, if you would ally yourself with the divine power which is renewing and redeeming the nations, if you would unbar the prisons of despair and open the gates of life to immortal souls, you have only to speak good words.

We associate strength and courage and vitality with full-grown manhood. And yet it is fearful to think that the strongest man may be crushed before the moth, the mighty may become as tow in the fire and as chaff before the whirlwind. God may lay his finger upon the secret springs of life so gently that the touch is not felt. The wisest physician cannot find the wound which needs to be healed. The man himself does not know that he is hurt. And yet he becomes like the frailest flower when touched by the frost. The light of intellect fades from his flashing eye. His arm no longer obeys the command of his imperious will. His face is changed, and the places where he was seen in the glory of his strength know him no more for ever. The poison which destroys life may be inhaled with the air which sustains it. The medicine which is taken to heal may only hasten the progress of disease. One moment the man may be pouring forth the treasures of a rich and cultivated mind; at the next, reason, memory, thought, intellect, may be all gone. The body itself may live on in utter and

pitiable helplessness long after the mind ceases to rule its own house.

The safeguards of the citadel of life are as wonderful as its exposures. Life is as great a mystery as death, and many times it is a greater mystery that one lives than it would be had he died. The soldier goes through all the perils of many battles and long campaigns, and then comes home to lose his life in some occupation that everybody thought was perfectly safe. Bruce passed unhurt through all the perils of fever and plague, corsairs on the Mediterranean and savages in Abyssinia, the storms of the sea and the simooms of the desert, and then came home to lose his life by a slight misstep at the door of his own house. Speke encountered still greater dangers and hardships in search of the fountains of the Nile: he was for months in the power of savage chieftains who would shoot men for amusement, and he came back to his quiet home in England to lose his life by a trifling accident while enjoying himself among his friends. We all trust ourselves to a thousand uncertainties and live. We may take especial care to be perfectly safe and yet die.

I take my seat at night in the swiftest train without asking a question about its safety, and I rush away through the darkness five times as fast as a fleet horse travels on a level road. Every bolt and timber in the car trembles with the violence and rapidity of the motion. I cannot stop the train. The reins of the fire-winged steed by which I am drawn are not in my

hands, and if they were I should not know how to curb or direct its mysterious and terrible power. To leap to the ground would be certain destruction. I have put my life in the hands of men whose faces I have never seen, and the track over which I am flying with such fearful speed is shrouded in darkness. They do not know, they do not care, who I am, whence I came, or how many others are interested in my return. I do not know, when I am shooting over some awful abyss, hanging by a flange of a finger's length to the edge of the precipice, or sweeping through narrow defiles with mountains of rock so near that I could touch them with my hand in passing. I only know that I am thundering on through the darkness as if drawn by some angry, fire-breathing monster, whose open mouth devours the distance before me by miles and by leagues. If any obstacle should mistakenly or maliciously lie upon the track, it would make the whole train a shattered and shapeless wreck in an instant. If a single wheel should deviate a hand's breadth from its appointed path, the heavy tidings of disaster and death will be carried to distant homes, and many families will look in vain for the return of the loved and lost.

Just here, where I am now passing in safety at midnight, a man made a slight misstep in going from one car to another yesterday at noon, and the rushing wheels severed his head from his body as quickly as if he had laid it beneath the axe of the guillotine.

Just before dark I saw the fragments of a passenger car which had been thrown from the track with all its living freight and dashed to pieces the previous evening. Yesterday morning I crossed a yawning gulf into which a night train plunged through a broken bridge nine days ago, causing the loss of many lives and untold suffering in a moment. I am to pass before morning along a high embankment down which a car with thirty passengers rolled a few days ago, as a loosened rock rolls from the side of a mountain. And so, all along the line of travel where I have been and where I am to go, I can count up the waymarks of disaster and death. And yet I quietly trust my life to the assumption that in my case nothing will break, nothing will lie upon the track, no conductor's watch will go wrong, no engineer or signalman will neglect his duty.

This seems like presumption, and yet how fearful, how similar are the conditions of peril and of safety with which we are surrounded in all the common walks of life. We live every moment in helpless subjection to elements of the most awful and resistless power. The preservation of our lives is momentarily dependent upon the nicest balancing of forces which are ever struggling against each other, and which are utterly beyond our control. We shudder when the swift car hurls us along the edge of the precipice, or over the deep gulf in which other travelers have found their grave. And yet the elements of the air we breathe are adjusted to

each other with such critical accuracy that a very slight change in the proportions would either kindle the flame of life to such intensity as to burn itself out in a few moments, or cover us with an irrespirable ocean, under which we should be as certainly drowned as in the depths of the sea. The vast earth hangs upon nothing in empty space, sweeping around the sun a thousand times swifter than the swiftest railroad train ever flies; it leans upon the plane of its orbit as a racer leans upon his path while he runs; and if it should lean a little more or a little less, or if it should break over its unfenced track, every house of the living would become the habitation of the dead. The current of life is kept in its channel by partitions as thin as the paper on which I write. A sudden motion, a single misstep, a trifling mistake, may transfer an immortal being from time to eternity. The spirit is bound to the flesh by such feeble chains, the organs and functions of life in our bodies are dependent upon so many contingencies, that we should scarcely dare move, speak, or breathe if we saw the inner workmanship and movements of the living machine, lest we should destroy the structure or derange its operation. God's shielding hand has mercifully hidden from our eyes the mysterious energies that are ever acting within us and all around us, as if it were true of his marvelous works as it is of him, that no man can look on them and live. And he would thus teach us to trust in the wisdom of the providence which we cannot comprehend, and to hold

ourselves in readiness for the events of the future which we cannot foresee. It matters little to us that the pathway of life must lie upon the very brink of the abyss of death, if we trust for guidance and support to the Hand that is almighty. We need not ask how closely we are walking upon the boundaries of the unseen world, if we look for protection to Him whose kingdom is the universe and whose habitation is eternity.

And indeed one of the most fearful and wonderful things in the constitution of our being is the perpetual consciousness of God's presence with us everywhere. The supreme and eternal King claims a throne in every heart, and whatever adverse power may usurp that seat, we are compelled to feel that the rightful Lord is ever present to claim his own. Wherever we go we must carry with us the inward sense of that awful Presence. However many and clamorous the voices that surround us we can always hear the gentle whisper within, Lo, God is here! The Almighty Father maintains this irresistible witness for himself in all places, at all periods of life, in all human souls. In their theories and speculations men may deny the existence of God, just as they have denied the existence of the material world, but they contradict their own skepticism every day they live. With all of God's gifts to man, he has not given him the power to be an atheist.

The most common things in our daily experience are

sometimes most fearful and wonderful. Our life is a sleeping and a waking—the one state as common as the other. And yet there is nothing more awful or mysterious than sleep. It has been called the image and twin-brother of death. And much of the awfulness and mystery of death which we all shun belongs to the semblance of death which we all seek. Passing from the one to the other is like a burial and a resurrection —the giving up of the ghost and the creation of a new life. The weary conqueror sleeps upon the blood-stained field. His heart still beats, his breath comes and goes like the swell of the sea when the storm is past; the flush of life may be seen upon his bronzed face as the sky still glows when the sun is set. But in all other respects he is like the thousands around him to whom the morning will bring no waking. The earth shakes with the march of the retreating foe, but he hears it not. The signal-fires blaze on the hill-tops, but he sees them not. The night-wind sweeps over him burdened with the groans of the wounded, but he is indifferent alike to the dying and the dead. He seems as fit for a soldier's bloody grave as any of the torn and blackened forms with which the tempest of war has strewn the trampled plain. And yet that unconscious and powerless sleeper shall wake from his seeming death, as the dead shall rise when the last trumpet sounds. Again the fire of passion shall flash from his kindled eye as the fateful lightning leaps from the silent cloud. His word of command shall transform a

sleeping host into a living whirlwind of wrath. His presence shall wake the war-cry from a hundred thousand voices. That one man, who an hour ago was as helpless and unconscious as the dead, shall become the incarnation of power and victory, from whom kings and emperors must obtain leave to wear their crowns. If that change from sleep to waking were not the most common thing in human experience, we should count it as mysterious and awful a display of divine power as the rising from the dead.

The whole connection of the spiritual and immortal mind with the material and perishable body is fearful and wonderful beyond expression. Who can tell how that which thinks and wills and feels under obligation can be imprisoned in a material form? How can mind be so bound up with flesh as to lift the arm with its strength, kindle the eye with its lightning, charge the voice with its thunder? How can the mind take to itself the excitement and pleasure which the body feels, and then the weariness and pain which the body suffers? Who knows in what apartment of the perishable house the immortal spirit dwells? How much space does it occupy? Is there any organ which, when removed, takes a part of the thinking mind and leaves the living body behind? Does the conscious, reasoning soul pervade the whole frame and yet lose none of itself when the body is maimed? Is it something that cannot be weighed or measured, divided or expanded, and yet is it imprisoned within walls through

which it cannot pass? The utter impossibility of answering one of a thousand such questions, and the inexplicable mystery which we find in the most familiar operations of our own minds, justify the exclamation, "I am fearfully and wonderfully made." And this unsearchable mystery of our own being brings us face to face with the spiritual and eternal world. It makes us feel that even now we are walking under the awful shadow of eternity; we have something to believe, to do and to live for, which should bind us in willing bonds to that Infinite One from whom all knowledge comes and in whom all mysteries are explained.

How fearful, how wonderful is that experience of the soul which we call remorse? In some moment of thoughtlessness, of passion or of temptation a man does wrong. He thus creates the sense of guilt in his own soul. He kindles a burning fire in the very centre and sanctuary of his own being. He cannot put out the flame. He cannot escape from it. He becomes his own judge. He pronounces sentence of condemnation upon himself. He is his own tormentor. He inflicts the stripes which torture him. He feels impelled by every sentiment of honor and of truth to be dissatisfied with himself. He suffers that kind of torture which is fearfully described as the never-dying worm and the unquenchable fire. There is no need of scourges or prisons to make the guilty man miserable. The fearful and wonderful constitution of his own

nature is such that an accusing conscience can dry up every fountain of joy in the soul and make every blessing a curse. This awful susceptibility to remorse is a part of our unchangeable and immortal nature. Its imperious and inexorable demands must be satisfied in some way, or we can never be at peace. There is no province in God's universal kingdom where a man with a guilty conscience can be happy.

And yet to balance this fearful exposure to self-inflicted misery is the equally wonderful susceptibility of the soul to be satisfied with doing right—to be happy in any condition with a good conscience. The deepest, purest, sweetest happiness, the peace which passeth all understanding, the joy that is unspeakable, comes from no outward state, it depends on no earthly condition. It springs from the simple, bare consciousness of rectitude in the soul. God has made every man the guardian of his own happiness by making him the keeper of his own conscience. Only be at peace with that clear, calm voice which whispers duty in the soul, and there is no power on earth that can make you miserable. Some of the happiest men that have ever lived have suffered every indignity and torture that could be heaped upon them, and yet they drew a pure, heavenly, divine peace and joy from the simple consciousness that they were doing their duty. This divine constitution of our nature puts it in the power of every man to make heaven on earth in his own heart.

And then, what is most wonderful of all, when by sinning we have thrown the precious jewel of our own happiness into the bottomless pit of darkness and misery, the Divine Hand finds it and brings it back to us. By the great sacrifice of the cross we are delivered from the reproaches of a guilty conscience. God himself plucks out the deep and dreadful sting from the penitent soul. He fills the believing heart with a peace which passeth all understanding. He opens before us the glory and the blessedness of an everlasting life. He adopts us as his own children, makes us heirs of his immeasurable riches, and gives us the ages of eternity in which to possess and enjoy our inheritance. This new, immortal hope, this full and everlasting admission into the glorious light and liberty of the children of God, may well lead every soul to exclaim, "I will praise thee, O Lord, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made."

God All in All

That God may be all in all.—1 COR. xv. 28.

THE HAVEN OF REST

XXVII.

GOD ALL IN ALL.

AS when the traveler climbs the ridge of some lofty hill he turns to trace the winding path that led him up the steep before he passes on to other scenes, so would we now cast a backward look upon the varied course along which we have been reading God's Unwritten Word. Coming back from the most discursive range through many fields, we would see what treasures we have brought home, and whether among them all there be one of infinite price.

In passing from one theme to another, I have endeavored to obey the command of Christ, to *consider* the wonders of divine wisdom and power with which the world is filled. I have endeavored to walk among the beauties and glories of the wide creation with a free and fearless step, and yet with as reverent and teachable a mind as that with which Adam walked in the garden of God. Craving your company, kind reader, and trying to blend your thoughts with mine, I have asked you to go out with me under the starry dome of the open heavens and learn the speech which day

utters to day and the knowledge which night showeth unto night. We have traced the measuring line of the divine power, which goes out through all the earth, and we have caught the sound of the divine words which are heard to the ends of the world. We have followed the march of the host of heaven on the fields of light, and we have listened to the song of the sons of the morning as they still sing over God's unceasing work in the divine harmony of the boundless creation.

We have been down to the shore of the sounding sea and gazed with awe upon God's wonders in the mighty deep. We have heard the awful hymn of praise lifted up by that mysterious main whose goings forth are unto the ends of the earth and whose secret chambers no eye hath seen. We have walked beneath the shade of ancient mountains, and shuddered to think of the mighty power that piled the rocky mass above the clouds and sunk "their sunless pillars deep in earth." We have bowed down and worshiped on the sacred heights which Moses climbed. We have gazed with rapture on the transfigured face of Jesus in the holy mount. We have looked with ceaseless delight upon the green landscape where God sends out the grazing flocks to find fresh pasturage upon a thousand hills. We have lifted up our feeble voice while the high places of the earth broke forth into singing and filled the hills with praise. We have looked on, with wonder and delight, while the fleecy vapors of the

morning wandered in white flocks along the mountain's side, and God spread forth the balancings of the clouds in the upper heavens, heralding the dawn with bright couriers in crimson and gold, veiling the noon with the legions of darkness, curtaining the couch of the setting sun with drapery dyed in heaven.

We have traced the long line of the centuries through which day and night have come marching down to us with measured step and unvaried succession, keeping the covenant which God has made with time without a moment's deviation from age to age. We have found no words to express our wonder while thinking of the unwearied hand of the Almighty turning the great earth-wheel beneath our feet without haste, without rest, from century to century, thus teaching the nations that dwell on the face of all the earth to trust in his word for evermore. We have gone out in the glory and the gladness of the beautiful spring, and learned the great lesson of our own resurrection from the new life which the returning sun calls forth from the icy grave of winter. We have learned to think that it cannot be a hard thing for the dead to be raised up by the power of Him who brings forth living harvests and food for millions from kernels of wheat that had been buried three thousand years with the dead.

We have seen the glory with which God clothes the flowers of spring and the grass of the field, and we have learned to believe that he who bestows such ex-

cellent beauty upon the frailest things of earth will not forget the being whom he made in his own image and into whose soul he breathed the breath of an immortal life. We have bowed down to worship in the solemn shade of the ancient forest, and we have listened reverently to the Voice which Adam heard in the cool of the day walking among the trees of his garden-home. We have made a sanctuary of the open heavens, and sought in the heights and depths of the viewless air for the presence of Him whose way is in the whirlwind and in the storm, and who walketh upon the wings of the wind.

We have seen the pitying angel of the sea coming upon cloudy wings in answer to the prayer of the parched earth, and pouring down the blessed rain upon the thirsty field and the mown grass, and we have prayed for the speedy coming of the day when righteousness and peace shall descend from heaven like showers that water the earth. We have walked forth in the glow of the morning, when the dewdrops sparkled like gems on the springing grass, and we have read in the renewed life of the watered fields and the incense-breathing flowers a fresh interpretation of the divine promise: "I will be as the dew unto Israel." We have seen the tempest gather, with cloud on cloud in billowy darkness rolled, and we have listened with deep awe when God sent forth lightnings, and they answered with thundering voices, "Here we are." And then we rejoiced to see that when the warring

elements had swept the plains of heaven with their wild artillery, and the trumpetings of the storm were dying away in the distance, God hung out the bow of peace upon the retiring cloud, and bade us look upon the token of his covenant with all flesh.

We have walked through the many-chambered house of the earth which God has given to man for his present habitation, and we have talked of our Father's goodness and forethought as we surveyed the riches of beauty and blessing with which every apartment is stored. The ancient rocks lift up their hoary summits to the skies to tell us that God has prepared a safe and secret place beneath the shadow of his throne for all who seek his aid. The palm waves its feathery branches by the fountains of water, and the cedar grows from century to century on the height of the storm-swept mountain, to teach us that the children of God find springs in the desert and the righteous shall flourish in immortal youth. The birds live without anxiety, and they carry their morning hymn to the gates of heaven, that we may welcome the lowliest lot with a grateful heart and learn to sing of mercies all the way onward in the journey of life. The happy birds are set to preach to us the divine sermon with which Christ repelled the first assault of the tempter's power, Man lives by every word from the mouth of the Lord.

The mighty river rolls through a thousand leagues on its way to the sea, supporting millions as it goes

the sun pours the infinite flood of light from his far-distant throne, everywhere producing growth and gladness with the silent touch of his quickening beams; the earth, the waters and the air teem with myriad forms of life exceeding small, yet of great power to teach us that God's bounty is large enough for all his creatures. The grade of being goes down so low as to embrace countless millions of creatures so small as to be utterly inconceivable to our minds; the systems of worlds extend so far over the immensities of space as to sweep beyond the utmost reach of our mightiest instruments and deepest calculations, and all to show us that, so far as we can know, there is neither end nor beginning to God's wondrous works. And from all our most diverse and distant excursions we have come back to look with silent and sacred curiosity upon ourselves, whom God made with form erect and face divine to preside over all his works in this world. We have tried in vain to solve the fearful and wonderful mystery of life. We have sounded the deeper and more awful mysteries of our spiritual and immortal being, and we have passed over depths and abysses where no measuring line of thought or reason can find a shoal or a shore.

And from all these varied excursions through the mysteries and glories of the boundless creation we come back with this one discovery—GOD ALL IN ALL. In whatever direction we push our inquiries we find it written in letters of light over our heads and under our

feet—God all in all. If we ask the question, What is the one prime, essential truth which underlies all knowledge, directs all discovery, enforces all duty and supplies all wants, the answer is ever the same—God all in all. If we ask the clouds, they roll it back in thunder. If we ask the winds, they breathe it forth in gentle whispers. If we ask the sea, it says the same with all its waves. If we ask the stars, they sing it on their way as they range the pathless fields of space—God all in all. If we turn our thoughts inward upon ourselves, and search the depths of our being for some great revelation to clear up the mystery of the present and to pour light upon the path of the future, the same answer comes back in gentle whispers and solemn pleadings from reason and memory and conscience and hope—from the awful conviction of sin, the secret dread of coming judgment and the irrepressible longing for immortality: all say that the beginning of wisdom and the entrance to all light and peace in the human soul lies in this one confession—God all in all. The word of divine inspiration glancing down the far future with omniscient vision, and foreseeing the time when all conflicts shall cease and all doubts shall be swept away, and all rightful rule and power and authority shall be established everywhere and for evermore, declares the grand, the glorious discovery of that day to consist in this—God all in all.

You see, then, that our study of the objects and operations of Nature has not led us to the adoption of

a cold and mechanical philosophy. We have not been so lost in admiration of the things made as to forget their Maker. In all our search we have not found any one great force, or law, or power of development to put in the place of God. We have not come to the conclusion that it is unphilosophical to subject all events in the material world of Nature to the immediate and constant direction of one infinite and eternal Mind. We have not learned to be satisfied with the supposed existence of some unknown and impersonal force before all the ages and behind all the worlds, which could never be made the subject of love or trust, prayer or worship.

The more accurately and widely we survey the whole domain of human knowledge—immensely extended as it has been in modern times—the more are we led to recognize the immediate presence and power of God in every atom and every world of his boundless creation. The most accurate and advanced science of the present age, and the inspired song of psalmists and prophets of old, agree in making all the works of God declare his glory in harmonious and lofty hymns of praise. All that we have learned from books, all that we have seen in the surrounding world, all that we have proved by scientific investigation, all that we have felt in the deepest experience of faith and prayer and hope, helps us to appreciate the vivid representations of the psalmist David and the prophet Isaiah, of the patriarch Job and the apostle John.

When we take the Inspired Book in one hand and the most accurate and advanced modern philosophy in the other, and go out to read and to meditate in the fields at noonday or at eventide, we find that the two books agree with each other and with all that we see in the open book of Nature around us. When the dry facts of science have caught fire from the living words of revelation, the two conspire to make the whole scene around us vocal with praise. The floods and the forests clap their hands; the mountains and the hills break forth before us into singing; the outgoings of the morning and the evening rejoice together; the heavens declare the glory of God; the thunder is his voice, the lightning is the brightness of his coming, the whirlwind and the storm are his chariot, and the clouds are the dust of his feet. The holy men of old, who spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost, were not unphilosophical in referring all the phenomena of Nature directly to God. Without knowing it themselves, they were in strict accord with all that science has discovered, or ever will discover, concerning the works of Him who made the heavens by the breath of his mouth and who gave life to all living creatures by his spirit.

There is no conflict between reason and revelation, science and religion, for the same infinite God speaks through both, and all his communications are consistent with himself. True science, like inspiration itself, looks through and beyond all intermediate agencies to

the first and final cause. It is not afraid to describe the phenomena of Nature as they are described in the Holy Word, when both have the same object in view. It loves to say, in the simple and sublime language of inspiration, God maketh the earth soft with showers of rain; God watereth the hills from his chambers; God thundereth marvelously with his voice; God causeth the grass to grow for the cattle and herb for the service of man; God feeds the fowls of heaven and the beasts of the forest; God clothes the flowers of the field with a splendor surpassing the robes of kings; God breathes the breath of life into all living creatures, and it is when he taketh away their breath that they die. The snow and the hail, the summer and the winter, the morning and the evening, the day and the night, are his, and they all fulfill his word.

And we shall have the most satisfactory as well as the most accurate and instructive view of the various forms and forces of Nature around us when we see in them most clearly the evidence of God's promise, the display of his power and the determinations of his will. The very darkness through which our eye cannot pierce, and the deep mysteries which reason cannot solve, speak to us of God not less truly than the most brilliant discoveries in science and the broad noon of divine revelation. So long as he is the infinite and eternal God he must make darkness his secret place, and he must hide the habitation of his throne. To the most exalted of his creatures his judgments must be

unsearchable and the mystery of his being past finding out.

And yet God is ever revealing himself to us with a measure of fullness perfectly suited to our faculties. There is no occasion for the sad cry of the doubting and despondent heart, "Oh that I knew where I might find him!" God is nigh to all who call upon him. He is always found by those who seek him. It is given—not indeed as a special privilege to the great and gifted, never to the proud and faithless, but always to the pure in heart—it is given to see God. It is the peculiar joy of the blessed in the Better Land that they see his face. And the life of heaven has begun below with those who see God in his works, who study God in his word, who walk with God in love, and who commune with God in spirit.

God commands us to acquaint ourselves with him that we may be at peace, and that good may come to us. He is ever so intent upon making himself known to us that he reasons and persuades, he entreats and implores, he wearies himself with spreading out his hands all the day in the attitude of a loving and compassionate father, inviting and alluring a reluctant child to his arms. In all the works of his hands, in all the ordinances of his eternal providence, on every page of divine revelation, by every ministration of his truth, by every influence of his spirit upon the hearts of men, he is declaring his creative power, his unsearchable wisdom, his everlasting love.

The voice of divine instruction is so clear, the indications of the divine presence are so numerous and constant, the pleadings of the divine love are so earnest and tender, that man can commit no greater mistake than to make little of God—he can be blinded with no greater folly than to live without God in the world. Think of it, you who are tempted to forget God, you who are in danger of wandering so far away from your Father as to think of him only as a distrusted and unfriendly stranger—every movement of your mind, every sensibility of your soul, every faculty of your being testifies that God is thinking of you in kindness every moment. The very dust which you tread beneath your feet is more truly God's work than the lines which flow from my pen are the tracings of my hand. The mightiest reasoners in the world could never convince me that any other hand than my own had written the lines which I have once seen following my pen across the page. Just as little should any argument, persuasion or temptation have power to convince you, or even to cause you the momentary feeling or impression, that any other hand than God's own gave you life and all of life's blessings.

If I should lay before your eyes a letter from your best human friend, every trace and turn of the lines would make you think of him. You have only to open your eyes to see the handwriting of God upon every object within the range of your vision. The shading of the flower, the song of the bird, the form of the tree,

the breath of the air, the tint of the sky, the green of the grass, are all thoughts of God, and they are designed to help you think of him. If you were gazing upon Raphael's picture of the Transfiguration, you would see thought and meaning and character in every shade and figure of the whole composition. Dazzled and delighted with the celestial glory which the creative imagination of the great artist has poured upon the perishable canvas, you would talk of him and think of him with ceaseless wonder and admiration. Open your eyes on any landscape, stand and look wherever there is anything to see, and you will behold diviner forms than Raphael ever drew. You will see the perfection of beauty which the great artist strove all his life in vain to equal, even in imitation. And all these shades of beauty which you see in the landscape, these forms of life which people the living world around you are thoughts of God, set before you to help you think of him. The worm that crawls in the dust, the living slime that floats at the will of the wave, the eagle that cleaves the cloud and rejoices in the storm, the archangel that ministers before the throne in heaven, receive life and being from the breath of the Almighty, and the divine workmanship is as clear and inimitable in one as in another.

The simplest line or figure drawn by the great Artist is enough to show the hand of the Master. God never does anything unworthy of himself. If we were fully competent to understand his works, we might turn to

a leaf or a bird or a blade of grass, and it would speak to us of God with ten thousand voices, and every voice would declare him to be all-wise, all-good, almighty. When Galileo was imprisoned on the charge of heresy for having asserted the motion of the earth on its axis, his cruel inquisitors came to tease and torment him with questions in his dungeon. Affecting great horror at the atheism of the man who had opened a new door into the infinite heavens of the divine glory, they asked him if he believed in the existence of God. He lifted a dry straw from the floor of his cell to the light, and said, "That alone is enough to demonstrate the existence of God." When Napoleon was on his way to Egypt, walking upon the deck of his ship beneath the glorious starlight, he overheard a company of philosophers debating the question whether the universe had any Creator. Stopping suddenly and breaking in upon their debate, he threw his hand upward with a significant gesture toward the starry vault and said: "Gentlemen, I hear some of you say there is no God. Can you tell me who made all that?" And indeed it makes little difference whether we consider the withered blade of grass or the heavens emblazoned with millions of worlds—we shall see the work of our Father and we shall find it all very good.

If we had the devout spirit of prophets and psalmists of ancient times, it would seem to us as if the whole surrounding creation were peopled with voices, holy voices, ever drawing our thoughts upward to God, ever

bidding us behold him in every creature into which he has breathed the breath of life—in every hue, shape, quality and dimension which he has given to the world around us. When we go out into the open country and cast our eyes upon the green landscape, the valley, the river, the plain, the harvest, upward to the eternal hills, and then far above to the wide-arching heavens illumined by the noonday splendor of that one great orb in whose light the mingled radiance of myriads of more distant suns is dazzled and lost, then with humility, yet with rapture, may we say, Our Father made them all. Holy is his name. The whole earth is full of his glory. The wide world which we inhabit is a living temple for his worship, sustained by the pillars of the everlasting mountains, frescoed with the shadows of clouds, filled with the incense of opening flowers and falling dews, hung around with the gorgeous tapestry of sunset skies and starry nights, echoing with perpetual anthems that swell in every note, from the murmur of the gentle breeze in the mountain pine to the earth-shaking thunder of the skies and the roar of the deep in storms.

Kind reader, it is not to put man's philosophy in the place of Christian faith that I have asked you to consider the heavens and listen to the voices of the teaching earth. It is rather to show you that our holy religion, the blessed gospel of Jesus Christ, is so great and pure and divine that it throws light upon every branch of human knowledge, it gives dignity and con-

secration to every human pursuit, it harmonizes with all the laws and forces of being and life, it draws confirmations of its truth from everything that is and everything that hath been or shall be. I have not forgotten that God's most complete and wonderful revelation of himself is in Christ. Having ranged at will through the vast galleries of earth, gazing with ineffable delight upon the pictured mountains, the purple clouds and the sapphire seas—having taken the mighty telescope and swept the infinite fields of space amid the blaze of millions of worlds—I behold a greater wonder: I am entranced with a more surpassing glory when I see the face of Him who was once nailed to the shameful cross, and who now wears the heavenly crown. In the height and depth of the love of that almighty Saviour I find something more difficult to estimate than the distance of the stars. In the mercies which he has shown to the lost race of man I find a number more difficult to count than the sands of the sea. In the humiliation which he bore for our sake I discover a greater mystery than the revolution of suns and systems of worlds.

To know that Saviour as the Son of God and the Son of Man is the most excellent knowledge. To sit at his feet like a little child and learn of him is the highest attainment of human wisdom. His wondrous work in redeeming the lost race of man shall be "the science and the song of all eternity." All power is his, in heaven and in earth. He holds the stars in his

right hand. He has the kingdom and the crown of the universe at his command. We have only to walk with him in lowliness of mind and learn the lessons of love and trust which he is now teaching, and by and by he will lift up the everlasting gates that open into the infinite realm of life and glory, and he will say to us, "Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you before the foundation of the world."

In that great and blessed Hereafter, when the everlasting gates of the future have been lifted up, and we have entered into our Father's many-mansioned house, there will be time enough to explore its riches and rejoice in its beauty. We here see only in part. All the splendors of this world which we now inhabit are only faint beams of the glory yet to be revealed. The light that now reaches us comes from afar, and we see it darkly through clouds and tears. But if we stand ready to enter when the gates are thrown open and the voice of the King says, Come, we shall see the source of the glory whose faintest beams are enough to make this dark world bright. Good men sometimes long to live many years on the earth to see the advance of the kingdom of Christ—to rejoice in the coming of the day when the whole earth shall be full of light and love. They would willingly bear all the burdens and sufferings of this present state for years and ages, if they could only see the completion of the great work to which they have given their toils and their tears, their

prayer and their hope. But there is no occasion for the fond desire. There is more to see and to enjoy by passing in when the door of our Father's house is thrown open than by standing without. With the use of faculties that never fail, and the flight of wings that never tire, and the succession of ages that never end, at our command, and the great house of God's infinite kingdom to explore, we can never feel that we were called away from our earthly home too soon—we cannot fail to see and rejoice in a brighter glory than will ever shine on this earth.

THE END.

THE HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD
AND THE FIRMAMENT SHEWETH HIS HANDY WORK
OUR FATHER'S HOUSE
DAY UNTO DAY UTTERETH SPEECH,
AND NIGHT UNTO NIGHT SHEWETH KNOWLEDGE